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MARROONED



MAROONED

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF "THE GOLDEN HOPE," "THE WRECK OF THE 'GROSVENOR,'" "THE LADY MAUD," "A SEA QUEEN," "JACK'S COURTSHIP," "THE FROZEN PIRATE," ETC., ETC.

MAROON—To put a person ashore on an uninhabited island
Nautical Dictionary

IN THREE VOLUMES

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CHAPTER I.

I SHOOT THE BELL-RINGER.

INDEED, this mysterious midnight bell-ringing was a puzzle that presently threatened to render the island solitude desperately uncomfortable whilst the sun was up, and absolutely hideous when he had gone down. It was time it was dealt with some way or other. A few more such nights as the two we had passed might play havoc with Miss Grant's nerves ; and our loneliness and helplessness were already so extreme that one felt it might presently go hard with one's brain if the paralyzing conditions of being marooned were to be supplemented by an element of mystery nicely calculated to finish off

in the intellect the work which grief, suffering, and despair had begun.

So when the morning came I slipped away for a plunge, feeling the need of a refreshment of that kind, after lying long in my clothes upon the powdery dust of my sandy couch ; then returning, and asking Miss Grant to spread a little breakfast for us meanwhile, I clapped my pistols into my pocket, and plunged into the wood. I steered a pretty straight course for the bell, looking earnestly about me as I thrust my way along ; and when I arrived at it, I stood surveying it for several minutes, wondering if the problem of the ringing was to be solved by an explanation that should be ridiculous for its simplicity when hit upon. But not the ghost of a solution offered. No ; some hand—man's, beast's, or ghost's—must have rung the thing. I touched it, and it swung so heavily and stiffly that it was impossible any bird, even the biggest on the island, alighting, could have swayed it to the emission of a single chime. I peered curiously at the adjacent trees, but witnessed no sort of hollow in which anything of bulk could hide itself. I

stared searchingly round for mark of human or any other tread, for hint of subterranean habitation, for any sign, in short, to resolve me this bewildering mystery ; but the scene, to as far as I could see, was as bare of such suggestion as I sought as the bell itself. I considered for a minute whether I should return for a musket and beat down the green and mouldering frame, but on peering close at the bell I observed that it was suspended to an iron hook in the gallows-like beam. This gave me an idea, and putting my hands to the bell I lifted it off its hook and placed it upon the ground. 'Twas a tolerably heavy piece of metal, though not so weighty but that I could easily carry it. There has been so little change for centuries in the fashion of bells, that no man could have told how old this one was by the look of it. No doubt I was right in reckoning it to have been a ship's bell. Its sonorous notes may have been reverberated in its time by the long-ago-vanished timbers of a carrack, or some tall ship belonging to old Spain or England.

I was for letting it lie, but thought, no ! for

the thing that hammered it last night may have sense enough to sling it afresh and worry us as before ; so I seized hold of it and succeeded in staggering with it painfully out of the wood, the thing occasionally tolling in a very melancholy way to the swaying of my figure as I lurched through the knee-high tangle. I succeeded in lugging it to where our luggage was, and sat down hot as fire and pretty nearly spent.

“ There,” said I, “ if the bell-ringer has a mind to enjoy himself to-night, he’ll have to show himself, and if he does I’ll *pot* him, if I never forgive myself for his murder afterwards.”

“ One wants to know the cause,” she returned, peering at the bell much as she had at the mattress when I told her I believed it moved ; “ this is the effect only. The mystery will remain the same although the bell may not ring.”

“ May not ! Should there be any further ringing to-night,” said I, “ I vow to steadfastly believe in ghosts for the rest of my life. As for the mystery, what we want is to be able to sleep when we lie down. It will be nothing

to me what made the noise, providing we don't hear it. Of course the puzzle is a supreme one, but that need not signify. We shall be sailing away before long, please God, and it will be something for us to be able to boast about in such an age as this, that the villains of the Iron Crown marooned us on an enchanted island."

She looked pale and worn, her eyes were listless, but this might have been owing to want of sleep, and to the harassment of fretful semi-superstitious thoughts; yet the set of her beautiful mouth showed a spirit of resolution staunch in her still. The refreshment that was to be obtained by privacy I felt would help her, and I resolved to devote the morning to conveying her luggage to the inner chamber, to suspending her hammock, and to isolating the little room by draping the door that led to it. Speaking from experience, I know that the misery of such a situation as ours is to be lightened not a little by the comfort of a shift of garments, by a plunge in the blue water, and the like. Robinson Crusoe dwells at large upon the sweetness of the feel of a clean shirt.

It looks but a light stroke, yet it is as deep a touch in its way as any of the best of the others in which Defoe's marvellous romance abounds.

After breakfast I climbed with her to the summit of the little hill. It was all bare sapphire sea, streaked here and there with long shining curves like a running of quicksilver on the surface. The sky was brilliantly blue and cloudless, the wind a faint, parched draught from the north-east ; the bite of the sun upon the exposed flesh was as though his beam touched the skin through a burning glass. It was insupportable, and we descended the hummock, my companion pale and silent, I sick at heart ; for though I had not dared hope to see anything, yet the fulfilment of such an expectation as this brings a rage and grief with it, as of madness almost, with every recurrence, though you should look for a ship fifty times a day, and always be sure in your soul before lifting your eyes that you will see nothing.

“ Can it be possible,” exclaimed Miss Grant, “ that no ship ever passes within sight of this island ? ”

“Don’t let us think that,” said I, “for a long time yet, at all events. We only came ashore here the day before yesterday. The speck that floated last night on the rim of the moonlight might have been a sail. This island lies very low, and there is plenty of ocean beyond the line of it all round us, so that a vessel might be within four or five leagues of us without seeing this Cay or we her.”

“But there is land down in the west, Mr. Musgrave?”

“Yes, the film of it, so the men said, was visible from the Iron Crown’s cross-trees.”

“Then,” said she, “that stretch of water yonder must be a passage between this island and the land there; so that a sail ought to be visible now and again.”

“The mischief lies,” cried I, “in my not knowing where we are. Those days of thick weather, with a head wind and some sort of current of which I knew nothing, threw me all adrift; not to mention old Broadwater’s chronometer, which in my opinion just ticked close enough to Greenwich time to tell him when the hour for another glass of grog had come round.

Of course, this island is one of the Bahamas. There is sure to be shipping hereabouts, making for the West Indies, or the Panama or Mexican sea-boards, or steering eastwards for European ports. We must be content to go on waiting and hoping. We have the materials ready stocked for a great smoke, and who knows but that before even sundown to-day we may be safe on board some craft, bound to a port whence we may easily make our way to Rio?"

This was a fancy to put a little light into her face. "I suppose," she exclaimed suddenly, with a slanting glance at me as though she could not summon courage to look at me fully, "you would never again undertake to escort a girl to her sweetheart?"

"Why should I?" I answered, wondering at the meaning of the very faint smile that hovered airily as a shadow about the beauty of her lips. "It is thankless work, after all."

"Indeed, you may say that," she exclaimed.

"Oh, understand me. I don't mind the horrors of a mutineering experience, or of being marooned. No, there may be a companionship

sweet enough to neutralize the direst conditions. I mean, 'tis going through a very great deal, you know, to oblige another."

"Poor dear Alexander," she cried, "he will *feel* obliged, I know; at least—" she paused suddenly with a reining in of her speech that made her cheeks flush somewhat to the effort. She struggled with an instant's confusion of mind, and then asked me calmly what I proposed to do that day, and what help she could be to me, but I saw in her eyes that she was still under the surprise of the thought whose utterance she had narrowly arrested. I could have sworn that she had only just saved herself from saying something which she would rather have bitten her tongue in halves than express. I looked at her again for a moment or two before answering; she was gazing seawards, as though the question she had this instant put was gone from her memory. Something in her manner—a subtlety as indeterminable as the aromas floating into the hot still air out of the hearts of the thousand secret and nameless flowers scattered throughout the island—quickened my breathing, till I broke with a start from a fancy

that might have held me profoundly meditative for the rest of the day, and told her what I meant to do.

“ But is there nothing for me ? ” she inquired, bringing her eyes to mine, though I seemed to miss the peculiar, familiar steadfastness that I had again and again found as fascinating as it was perplexing.

“ Can you cook, Miss Grant ? ”

She clasped her hands, sunk her head with a little shake of it, and said, “ Not nicely, I fear.”

I said, “ You will not mind trying your hand at a dish of turtle soup ? ”

“ How is it made ? ”

“ Why,” said I, “ by boiling the meat, I suppose. It will be something to do. Then there are those craw-fish. I’ll make a start by lighting the kitchen fire.”

I forthwith fell to work to collect a quantity of wood, which I carried to the furnace, where it was soon blazing merrily, with the thin blue smoke of it passing fairly out through the skylights, which I took care to open to their fullest extent ; so that though at the start the smoke set me coughing a bit, the atmosphere all round

the spiral volume was presently clear enough to enable me to breathe without inconvenience. Indeed, I learnt from this subterranean kitchen how our forefathers had managed without chimneys, a matter that must have puzzled me all my life had I not observed how this smoke going straight and clean to the roof formed a cloud there that drained away through the skylight as cleverly as if its vehicle had been a smoke-stack. I then filled the vessels we had discovered in the cave with fresh water, and put on a big saucepanful to boil. 'Twas roasting work, what with the fire inside and the sun out, and I had to strip to my shirt and trousers, with a big straw hat for the protection of my head, though there were several times even then when I came very near to fainting. Meanwhile, to make sure of something to eat, I popped half-a-dozen of the craw-fish into the saucepan, and then knife in hand went down to the turtle; but was a very long while indeed coming at the inside of it. It was like jobbing at a man in armour; but the secret dawned upon me after many experiments, though I confess I never fell to any work that was more distasteful to me

in my life. That the sun might not corrupt my turtle, I dragged it at the expense of many groans and much perspiration to the entrance of the underground rooms, down which I tumbled with it as though marooning had converted me into a sort of ant ; and indeed I felt like one, I can assure you, as I painfully dragged my prey to the hole and staggered with it into subterranean gloom.

I see now with the eye of memory the stately and beautiful figure of Miss Grant stepping from the furnace, as I call it, after a peep at the humming saucepan, to the short length of passage for the cool of the shadow, though there was no breath of air to descend. I had left her at work when I went on one of my errands to the brook, or to the turtle, habited in her long dress, the clinging folds of which, with a yard-long measure of it trailing astern, I saw must bother her presently, and I looked forward to the pleasure of helping her pin her gown clear of her feet ; but on my return I found that she had divested herself of the dress, and that her attire now was an under-skirt of brilliant hues. I imagined she had changed her

gown, so ignorant was I of the mysteries of ladies' apparel, and thought that never could any sort of female garb more gracefully harmonize with any particular kind of beauty than did this short, richly-coloured *frock*, as I supposed it, with the fine form of Miss Grant. I've heard it said that the Spanish are the only ladies in the world who can *walk*, all others waddle, glide, amble, do anything in short but step with a proper sort of grace. I might believe this after recalling the gait of the ladies I have known, and contrasting them with Miss Aurelia's—another maternal legacy, no doubt, as I might suppose now that there was sufficient disclosure of her movements to enable me to appreciate the perfection of their freedom and their inimitable, easy, gentle dignity. She had removed her hat ; the furnace flames tintured her soft hair with their yellow hue ; and in the subdued shadowing of the room her eyes looked to have recovered their earlier brilliance. Her arms were bare to the elbow—limbs of moulded ivory. I stood at gaze for some moments, as startled by this new revelation of her charms as I had been on the day when I had first met

her. I know this dwelling upon a girl's perfections in the face of the acres of paper which have been covered again and again with like accounts is but poor work, and can but make tiresome reading ; but one is not often marooned with such a woman as Aurelia Grant, and seeing even then how it was with me in my thoughts of her, I ought to be forgiven for this trick of pulling out her likeness, and asking you just to look at it once more.

By noon I had managed to transport the luggage to our underground home, lightening the burthen of the larger boxes by conveying parcels and bundles of their contents in my arms. I also took care to bring the bell along and place it in the kitchen, on the left of the entrance, where it was out of the road ; and it will be strange, thought I, as I gave it a benedictory kick, if anything resembling this blessed thing torments us again to-night. My next business was to drape the entrance of the room that Miss Grant was to occupy. I had slung her hammock, spread rugs to serve as a carpet, and put a couple of high-backed chairs into the apartment ; so that with the boxes convenient

to her hand, and the sunshine streaming fair upon the skylight, and flooding the atmosphere with its radiance, whilst the tropic perfumes floating heavy and languid above came sifting down to sweeten the air, as though you should have wafted a nosegay of flowers there, the odd, earthy chamber looked positively habitable. The entrance was low, and a single shawl effectually served as a curtain.

“Yonder turtle-shell,” said I, pointing to the creature I had killed, “when cleaned out and purified will make an excellent hand-basin. You have a looking-glass, and all other toilet requisites, as the hairdressers call the things. As matters are, Miss Grant, we might be worse off. Better surely this roof than the two trees ’twixt which your hammock swung. Confess now that you have no longer any reluctance in taking up your abode here?”

She smiled, casting her eyes over the room with a glance at the skylight; and I observed the tremble of just a little faltering of resolution, so to speak, in the delicate pout of her underlip.

“I have one small misgiving,” she answered.

“What is it ?” I asked.

“Suppose there *should* be a man on this island ?”

“Well ?”

“You don’t believe there is ; but somebody must have rung the bell.”

“And supposing there *should* be a man ?” said I.

She shot another glance at the skylight, and answered, “He might shut us up down here.”

“How ?” I asked.

“Why, Mr. Musgrave, by closing the skylights, and covering them with sand, and then putting the cover on to the opening, and piling sand on that too.”

“Well,” said I, smiling, for my mind had long since got rid of the fancy that there might be a man somewhere hidden, though, as I admit, the midnight ringing was all the darker as a puzzle to me for that very notion, “there is but one way of checkmating the skulking rogue, assuming him to be of flesh and blood, and I’ll attend to it immediately lest it should escape me,” and mounting to the open, armed with one

of the old muskets, I hammered at the hatch-cover until it lay before me in several pieces. These I carried one by one below, for the hatch was not to have been squeezed through the opening in its entirety, and stowed the fragments hard by the bell. "Now," said I, "your friend the ringer may indeed close the skylights, but it will put him to his trumps to cover that entrance. Think—there is nothing on the island that would serve him for such a purpose, unless he should cut down a tree, and whittle out a balk of it as a cork for that mouth. No, Miss Grant, little risk I think of our being buried alive."

My talk and the knocking to pieces of the hatch-cover reassured her, and as we might hope now that our turtle-broth had been boiling long enough, we prepared the little rustic table for dinner, and put on it a bottle of wine, a few biscuits, the remains of a tin of meat, the cooked craw-fish, along with a big bunch of plantains I had cut after bathing. But alas! we had but one knife between us, no forks, spoons, nor plates. How then were we to ladle up the soup! Hitherto we had eaten with our fingers

and drunk from a meat tin ; but the broth demanded an effort of ingenuity.

“ I have it,” I exclaimed, and stepping into the sunshine I made my way to the beach, where, collecting an armful of shells, big and little, I carried them to the brook, thoroughly cleansed them of the sand and salt, and returned with them to the kitchen. Better soup-plates than the large shells made we could not have desired, and the smaller shells made excellent spoons. How the soup relished it boots not to say. Wanting salt, herbs, and the like, it lacked perhaps the savouriness that a City alderman is accustomed to meet with in a potage of turtle, but the meat proved juicy, and the liquor grateful enough in its way, and though, to be sure, it was a sort of mess that I could not look at now, I swallowed it then with enjoyment and appetite, giving secret thanks to Heaven that there was plenty more of it.

It is quite likely that any Jack coming ashore to peer about, discovering these underground rooms, and looking down into them, might have taken Miss Grant and myself for a corsair and

his leman. The rich dyes of her petticoat made her apparel romantic to the eye, and the poetic suggestiveness of her attire was heightened yet by the free graces of her roughened hair, and her fair and most shapely arms bare to the elbow. I, habited in shirt and trousers, needed but a red sash round about my loins to present a very fair copy of a pirate. It was entirely in keeping too that we should appear as though we were feasting, and the picture would have been faithful enough, I doubt not, to the liveliest imagination, of a piratical lair, coloured as it was with details of aged muskets and cutlasses, the venerable cooking utensils, the two century-old chairs, the queer, aged, straddling table at which we sat, if, instead of lifting shells to our lips, my lovely companion and I had been able to pledge each other in cool sparkling draughts from richly-chased goblets of precious metal. In truth, what the picture wanted to complete it was a hint of plunder. Miss Grant's sparkling rings were but a meagre intimation in that way. You would have looked for a golden candle-stick or two, a silver crucifix, a sack in a corner bulged into a glittering *yawn*

at the mouth by the pieces of eight which filled it.

“This is a sort of experience,” said I, “which a man should need to be very young indeed to enjoy. One should be quite a little boy to think it fine. Yet I am realizing the dreams of millions of small lads. To think of being all alone with a beautiful lady upon an uninhabited island—to live in a cave that in bygone years resounded the revelry of the sea-robbers again and again—to have within arm’s-reach several of the exact sort of muskets which Crusoe carried on his shoulder—to live upon turtle and plantains, with the delightful prospect of having some day to fell a tree and scoop out a canoe—oh! the bliss to countless small boys of such realization! What spasms of envy would thrill through the schools of Great Britain were the young friends of the old Whackums to learn that at this moment there was a young gentleman in company with a young lady living in a pirate’s cave in an island hard by the Spanish Main.”

“I am afraid school-boys would not envy you quite so much as you think,” said she; “they do not greatly value ladies’ society

either in books or in life. To be cast away with a beautiful female—to be marooned even with a lovely princess, and live all alone with her in a cave—” She shook her head, laughing quietly. “No, Mr. Musgrave, if I know boys at all, they would not thank you for such an experience. Give them guns and canoes and pirates’ caves, with plenty of oranges; but no girls, if you please.”

“It is strange that little boys should ever make men,” said I, going to my coat for a cheroot. “I am not very old myself, yet I find it difficult to believe that I could ever have been younger than sixteen. Would to Heaven that the light and colour and fancy of childhood attended us to the end! ’Tis miserable to have to sail out of a glowing horizon into the gray of the middle sea, and thence onwards yet to gloom. It is Byron, I think, who asks who would not be a boy again. Not I, for one, unless I could remain so. If a man has to turn out, it is better he should get up at once and have done with it. I love a sweet dream as fondly as any, but since the awakening is inevitable, don’t delay it, say I; and then let the

vision pass away for good. Who would live again through a mere phantasy, knowing it to be such? For those who incline that way we build lunatic asylums. No, I wouldn't be a boy again. The opening of one's eyes upon the reality don't make it worth while, as the tailor says when you offer him less for his coat than he can cut it for."

She listened to me with her cheek resting in her hand, her figure inclined, the swell of it methought gathering a particular beauty from the white of the arm on which her head reposed, her dark eyes fixed on mine with a hint of mingled merriment and puzzled inquiry in their serene scrutiny. But when I ceased she changed her posture, removed her eyes, and with a careless look around, said almost abruptly, as though the shift of mood in her was an effort rather than an unconscious transition, "How are we to get away from this island, Mr. Musgrave? You have been a sailor—is there no remedy for people in our situation? I wonder what Alexander would suggest if he were here."

I lighted my cheroot stolidly. There seemed

to me something insincere, though I protest I don't know why I should have thought so, in her speaking of my cousin at that moment. I eyed her in silence a minute, and then said, "I believe if Alexander were here he would take my view of our condition. There are plenty of trees, but we have no tools. Had we a chopper we might fell a trunk, and in the course of months, perhaps of years, succeed in hacking and hewing the timber into the aspect of a canoe. But then how to launch it? The trunk of a tree, even when shaped into a canoe, is not to be whipped under the arm as though it were the model of a boat and carried to the water. I think if Alexander were here, Miss Grant, he would agree with me, that our one chance lies in our making our presence known to a passing vessel; which reminds me," said I, rising and looking at my watch, "that it is about time I should take a peep seawards, for it will be some hours now since I visited the hummock." I was walking to the steps. "You do not ask me to join you," said she. I turned and noted a look in her, half wistful, half amused.

“Do pray join me,” I cried; “I was afraid that the heat—”

“No,” she interrupted; “I expect there will be nothing to see.” I smiled at the coquettish feigning of gentle resentment in her manner of drawing aside the shawl that screened her room. She disappeared, closing the drapery afresh, and I climbed through the opening into the sunshine.

My hat was wide-brimmed like that of a southern planter. It sheltered me as effectually as an umbrella, and under the shadow of it I paced leisurely towards the hummock, but puffing perhaps with unnecessary energy at my cigar, to certain thoughts of Miss Grant which rose in me as I advanced. “Pooh!” thought I, “what a madman must I be, situated as we are, to think of *anything* under this wide blue sky but our deliverance, and how to effect it!”

It chanced just then that, my eyes happening to turn towards the scattering of trees which came thinning out of the mass of the forest round to that part of the sand where I had met with the iron ring of the hatch, I spied, or seemed to spy, a human face peering at me

from the midst of a huddle of leaves big enough to serve for the foliage of a cotton-tree. I stopped dead like a man transfixed, the cigar I was about to raise to my lips arrested midway, as though my arm had suddenly been blasted. The light rained in a blue dazzle betwixt me and the heavily-leaved bough, and the glare of it obliged me to blink, that on looking again I might make sure. Yet when I stared afresh the face was gone. I hollowed my hands into the form of a binocular glass to shelter and strengthen my sight, and gazed again, but there was nothing to be seen saving the surface of green leaves which seemed to arch the solid bough they draped, as though each was of the weight of a giant banana. It seemed incredible that I should have been mistaken. The vision, if it were nothing more substantial, had been that of a swarthy face with white whiskers, and eyes that might have been of a reddish tinge, glittering under shaggy white brows. I listened, but nothing was audible save the humming, chirruping, and whistling, which swelled to the ear like the commingling of the notes of a bagpipe with the

vibratory hum of a church organ. All was stirless in the tree, though I watched it attentively. I had left my pistols in the kitchen as I must call it, or I should certainly have let fly at the branch, and taken my chance of a murdered man falling out of the foliage of it. Still thinking it impossible that my sight could have been deceived, I walked briskly towards the tree, and looking upwards searched it as penetratingly as the greenery would permit; then seeing nothing saving a paroquet or two, I walked a little further towards the forest, still gazing upwards, but nothing answering in the least imaginable degree to the object, real or imaginary, that had confounded me, met my eye. I again strained my sight, sending glance after glance around, then returned to the open, and proceeded towards the hummock, satisfied that what I had beheld was a deceit of the imagination, though this notion did not help to soothe my secret perturbation. Unless the man actually lived inside the trunk of the tree out of whose leaves he had peered, 'twas impossible if he were human to have escaped the searching gaze I had directed at

the intermingling of boughs. I said to myself it was some illusion of the sight, some fantastic creation wrought by the trembling flash of the sand and the wide blue brilliance of heaven and ocean upon the ball of the eye. And yet it was an apparition, too, to so fit the bewildering enigma of the bell-ringing, that, spite of my declaring to myself it was fancy, I was as uneasy as if I had been sure it was real.

However, on reaching the hummock my thoughts underwent a sudden and violent change, for on glancing leisurely along the sea-line, thinking of nothing but the man's face in the tree, I caught sight of a ship's canvas down in the south, like the point of a sea-fowl's pinion, projecting white as foam and lustrous as pearl above the horizon. I clapped my hands with the sudden transport the sight awakened in me, and without pausing to consider the distance at which the craft hung, I set fire to the pile of faggots. There was but the mildest breathing of air. The wood took some time to kindle, and then the smoke, darkening and fattening out in thickness to the green coating of grass and leaves with which I had covered the

faggots, went nobly straight up to a great height—a grand signal indeed, as I thought, where it lazily arched over plume-like and floated softly into the east. I stood watching for upwards of three-quarters of an hour, with my eyes thirsting for a sign of the growth of the sail, staring with such tormenting intensity, that again and again the vast plain of sea brimming out to the brassy azure of the sky, steeping to it streaked with the silver lines of currents and turquoise-coloured swathes, winding and dilating and melting into the richer hue of the brine, would start as if to spin with gathering speed round and round, and I had to blind my sight with my hands to check the mighty waltz, the first reel of which was as sickening as a swoon to the brain. I was alone, and exerted but little judgment, or I might have guessed that on that stagnant surface the sail must hover for hours apparently motionless. Yet it was certain that she had hove in sight since the morning, that is to say, since I had last viewed the sea, and either a faint breeze of wind had brought her to where she was, or she was a small vessel stemming

the water to the propulsion of her sweeps or long oars.

The fire was burnt out ; the smoke drained dimly into the air off the smouldering embers, and was of no more use as a signal than the flourish of a handkerchief. Then, after waiting a little while, and watching as intently as the heat and glare of the giddy atmosphere, swimming to the sea from the dazzling brass of the heavens, would suffer, I could no longer doubt that the distant vessel was drawing down the slope into the south-west ; whence, as there was no wind to propel her, it was certain that she was being urged by oars. In that case she would probably be some small drogher or coasting craft.

My disappointment was not so bitter as I should have expected to find in me at sight of a ship lingering long enough to wildly tantalise hope, and then tardily melting out of view. Maybe I found a large stroke of comfort in the very vision of her, for now I might suppose that the speck we had seen in the wake of moonshine last night, and taken to be a deception of the fancy, was a real ship after

all ; so that with yonder one we might say that two sail had hove, in near upon twelve hours, within reach of our eyes, even from the very low elevation we occupied. This was as good as understanding that the sea round about us was navigable water, that the ocean betwixt us and the film of land away down west might be a sort of highway, as Miss Grant had suggested, and that therefore a ship might at any hour pass close enough to our little principality of crickets and parrots to catch sight of our smoke and send a boat. So, not very greatly disheartened, I sent another look at the pearl-like fragment in the south, and making sure now by the airy blending of it with the azure that the craft was heading away and would be out of sight presently, I descended the little hill, purposing when the cool of the evening came to build up another fire ready to signal with.

As I approached our secret chambers, Miss Grant came out of the opening. It was the strangest sight in the world to see her rising, as it were, out of the earth ; that was the impression you got from the flat of the sand. It put a fancy into me of the resurrection of

the body, followed on by a daintier imagination of Venus shaping white out of the foam—though the girl's apparel was a little in the way of *that* idea. You saw nothing of the grave-like hollow, merely the figure of the beautiful girl that seemed to float up out of the blinding silver of the sand. Her apparition in this way was as sweet a surprise as could fascinate the eye. She had changed her attire, robed herself in a white gown, dressed her hair afresh, heaping it on her head, with a wide straw hat tilted on it like a picture of a beauty in George the III.'s day.

“You have been a long while watching the sea, Mr. Musgrave,” she exclaimed, smiling as if to the surprise and admiration with which I regarded her.

“I have been endeavouring to signal a ship,” said I.

“A ship,” she cried, approaching me close, and staring at me.

“Yes,” I answered, “she will have faded out by this time like the smoke of my fire. But no matter. The sight of her is a warrant of more to follow. All I have to do is to keep a

bright look-out. We shall be rescued yet, and *soon*, depend on it."

We strolled together to the shadow of the trees where our camp-stools were, and seated ourselves. For a long time she talked of nothing but the ship, and I could see, by the flush in her cheeks and the gathering light in her eyes, how useful to her spirits was the hope that my news of having sighted a vessel had brought with it.

"We ought to feel grateful to the crew of the Iron Crown," said she, "for having sent our luggage with us. Oh, Mr. Musgrave, how am I to express the refreshment of a complete change of apparel? It robs the island of half its terrors."

"Rather lucky," said I dryly, "that I kicked up that iron ring, though it cost me a sprawl. Is not the privacy of a bed-chamber in such a place as this almost as nice as a change of clothes?"

"Well, I didn't like the idea, I confess," she replied, with a pretty shake of the head. "I don't like it much yet, I admit. Those tomb-like rooms are very well in the day; but when

the long dark night comes !” she added, with a light shiver.

At this I involuntarily turned my eyes towards the forest, with a glance up aloft and at the trees beyond, thinking of the demoniacal white-whiskered old face, with its cairngorm eyes brilliant in the midst of its swarthy countenance, that had seemed to peer at me a while gone. But I would not even hint at the possibility of such an apparition. I was still inclined to reckon it a mere fancy ; besides, I knew that even though I should vaguely refer to it as some optical delusion occasioned by a fantastic writhe of the leaves to the folds of the hot blue air between, sleep would be murdered for her that night. Nevertheless, I made up my mind whilst the sun was still high to put my pistols in my pockets and search the little forest afresh ; for, to speak honestly, the memory of the swart malignant countenance coming into my mind again rendered me secretly very uneasy, and I felt, when the night drew down and I was at rest in the profound stillness of the underground kitchen, that I should regret not having made again a careful investigation of the wood.

I got up, saying, "I'll just take another walk through those trees, Miss Grant. I want to satisfy myself that there is not a second bell hidden somewhere in the green thickness. It would be insupportable, you know, to be awakened by a new kind of chiming to-night."

"Why should you imagine there is a second bell?" she asked, with her eyes seeming to enlarge to the very thought of it.

"I *don't* imagine there is," said I, "but no harm can follow another look round ; besides," I added, smiling, "I might chance upon the fellow that has troubled us for the past two nights, so that even should we be unable to hang him before sundown, we might seize him to one of those trees as Broadwater seized the half-blood to the foremast, and go to our rest without apprehension of being corked up."

I laughed out to let her suppose that I talked for talk's sake only, and fetching my pistols made for the forest, taking the road into it past the tree in which I had seen the real or imagined face, waving my hand to her as I strode into the shadow. And a shadow it was.

when you penetrated into the thick of the trees, coming as you did from the sultry whiteness of sand, and the hot radiant stare of the unwrinkled deep up at the sky that opened and contracted its atmospheric folds of sapphire as it seemed—a shadow cool, dark, green, and as slumberous a spot as one could have pictured, with its sombre, pillar-like trunks of trees rising out of the stillness of the tall and prickly undergrowth into the cathedral hush of the gloomy density of boughs and leaves, but for the incessant splitting of the silence by the cries, whistlings, and croakings, as familiar now to my ear as the twitter of the London sparrow, or by the airy disturbance of the plumes and pinions of birds rustling on the wing with a sound as of the rending of satin as they sailed from one tree to another, brushing the foliage as they flew.

The direction I was unconsciously following brought me, with some painful thrusting of my legs—for in places the tangle was as hard and stubborn as a fence—to the spot where the gallows-looking frame from which I had unhooked the bell stood. It was scarce within

view of me when I caught sight of a large hat placed exactly over the hook from which the bell had depended. I looked and looked, greatly amazed, and, let me frankly own, with a mind for some moments not a little disordered by consternation. I was of course as sure as that I lived that no hat was upon the frame when I had unhung the bell. I stared nervously around me, mechanically drawing a pistol from my pocket, and looking first into one twilight avenue and then into another, then gazing narrowly at the herbage round about, afterwards staring overhead, listening meanwhile intently. I approached the hat by a step, and inspected it. It was such a piece of headgear as might have been washed up by the sea. I raised my hand and pulled it down, but instantly dropped it, for it was horribly clammy and cold, and made you think, from the sensation you got from it, of groping in the dark and stroking down a dead man's face. It was apparently a felt hat that had once been black, but it was now green and bronzed with time and wet. It was very broad-brimmed, with a sort of sugar-loaf crown ; much such a

sort of hat indeed as the boys clap upon Guy Fawkes' head when they carry him off to the stake. I turned it over with my foot to see what the inside of it looked like, but it had long since been divorced from any lining that may have garnished it in its heyday. It was old enough indeed both in fashion and aspect to have belonged to one of the people who had dug out and used the underground chambers. But who or what since the morning had placed it upon that bell-frame? It gave me a kind of shrinking feeling, I can tell you, to think that there might be human eyes watching me out of some of those green dyes of shadow round about, and as I stood there I never knew from instant to instant but that the flame of a fire-arm would leap from behind a tree, or an arrow sling past my ear.

The sight of this hat convinced me that I had not been mistaken in supposing the wild, grotesque face I had caught a glimpse of to be that of a *man*. Miss Grant was right. There must be one or more human creatures in hiding here. The bell could not ring itself; the hat had been brought from a distance—I

must certainly have seen it when I first explored this place, and stood looking from the scaffold to the grass far as my sight could follow it ; I say, the old hat had been brought here and placed upon the frame, and if this did not signify human agency, then it was not to be accounted for but by supposing the devil himself to be at large upon the island. I was startled, astonished, alarmed, as I believe any man would have been ; but I was resolved, nevertheless, not to quit the wood without a further good hunt, and so pushed on, pausing incessantly to listen and to look, to kick at some suspicious huddle of huge blades of aloe-like growth, to stare into the trees, or to fight my way to some trunk looming with a yawn in it in the twilight so as to make one suppose it hollow. But to no purpose. I believe there was no part of that forest I did not traverse, and in all I spent a full hour in making the rounds of it ; but not the least hint of anything approaching humanity did I see.

The puzzle was so supreme as to depress my spirits by the heaviness of the perplexity it excited ; but I made up my mind to say nothing

about the hat to Miss Grant. I was now as convinced as she that there were more people than ourselves on this island, though but one more only, and I believed that it was *his* face I had seen amongst the leaves. All sorts of wild notions occurred to me as I staggeringly made my way out of that little forest. It had been the face of an old man. Was the bell-ringer some aged pirate, who had gone mad, and wandered about the place, living upon such fruit and herbs as he could grub up, grown expert in the art of climbing trees, and secret-ing himself by such years of practice as had enabled Selkirk to hunt the goat more fleetly than the goat itself could run, using the spreading branch for his bedroom, through not having intellect enough to hunt after and dig out the sand-covered portals of his subterranean home? Or, thought I, is it conceivable that there *are* such things as spirits?—that the old navigators' fables about demon-haunted islands are not the lies which our scientific age protests them to be? Upon my word, thought I, as I broke my way along with a nervous glance over my shoulder, how many weeks, nay, how many

days of marooning go to the addling of the most healthy brains ?

“What have you seen, Mr. Musgrave ?” asked Miss Grant, as I approached her.

“Just a parrot or two,” said I.

“You have been a long while watching them,” said she, eyeing me so attentively that I feared she would find in my face some small signs of the astonishment and misgivings which filled my mind.

“Oh,” I exclaimed carelessly, “the forest is dark, as you know, and a sheer maze in its way, with spots where the high guinea grass leans to you tough and piercing as a crop of bayonets. I was resolved to hunt the place through and through, a thing not to be done in ten minutes. Now, Miss Grant,” I went on, with a glance at my watch, “suppose we go to tea, as I must call the meal—though for a real homely cup of tea just now, served up with buttered toast and a new-laid egg, with a plateful of watercress, I’d part with every inch of turtle betwixt the shells I opened this morning. Heaven bless us all, to what weak desires will marooning reduce a man !”

I had to build up the beacon fire again that evening, and when we had made a meal off some cold turtle and plantains, a sweet biscuit or two, and a shellful of sherry, and water fresh and cool from the brook—a sort of incipient sangaree—I fell to collecting as much wood as would go to the making of a great smoke, but the sun had been sunk some time before I had stacked and got ready the pile for firing. When I had made an end of this, I gathered a quantity of grass and leaves, and took the heap to the kitchen to serve me for a mattress by and by. Again and again I looked at the ocean, but it always stretched out blank, without a tip of cloud even to quicken the pulse for an instant with the fancy of a sail. As the evening darkened into night, with the moon rising slow and red directly in the face of us, where the eastern sea, black as ink, washed to the huge dull gold shield of the sulky-looking planet, as though the orb was some glorified head of land against whose very face the deep brimmed without a ripple of breaker, the disquietude raised in Miss Grant by the prospect of a night underground increased in her. I *felt* her uneasiness

rather than gathered it from her speech ; but it would have been unkind to us both to humour her—a mere provoking, in short, of some wretched tropic distemper—to sling her hammock between the trees again, and to make my bed among the land crabs. Indeed, though to be sure we had passed two nights safely in the open, the memory of the ugly glimmering face amongst the leaves, along with the odd and astonishing sign of the hat would have rendered the obligation of sleeping out here again very disagreeable to me, I can assure you. Why, it was only necessary to fancy that there *was* a man on the island to suspect that he might cut our throats if we gave him the chance. Underground, at all events, we should feel tolerably secure, by which I mean that the courage that would bring the wild creature, whoever he was, to the side of a girl motionless in a hammock, or to a man slumbering peacefully on the sand, with his figure clean cut on the face of the coral dust as though it were an inlaying of jet, and a very visible mark therefore for the assassin's knife—I say, the courage of the mysterious creature might fail

him when it came to his having to seek us in a dark vault. He knew we were armed, and though he might have a knife, or spear, or something of the kind, it was a hundred to one if he had a musket or pistol, or ammunition for it at least. So, to my companion's disquiet, obvious in her fits of thoughtfulness and her uneasy glances towards the cave, showing where her thoughts lay, I seemed to pay no heed.

The night came on very glorious, with the soaring of the moon, the stars thick strewn, just stir enough of night air to send the sweet smells of the dew-washed island flowers lazily floating to us in folds of aromatic atmosphere, and a delicate seething of surf to blunt the edge of the shrillness of the inland concert. To kill the time, I proposed that we should go and hunt for turtles' eggs, and we went together to the creek, keeping a bright look-out for the impress of the tread of the turtle. But though we saw marks in the sand which fairly well resembled the tracks we sought, they led us to nothing.

"Perhaps," said I, "the turtle doesn't lay in

this month. If I could have foreseen our adventure, I should have read a little in the natural history of this part of the world."

We continued our search for some time, probing at the sand, but if there were any eggs about, they were too cleverly hidden for us to come at, so we stepped down to the beach, facing the moon, where there was a clear, long, white walk, flat, and but a little less hard than a ship's deck, and paced to and fro for a long while; though there was no complete surrender of ourselves to each other this night as on former occasions, when she would reflect my mood, or I hers. The fact is, she could think of little but the underground bedroom, and I of the hobgoblin face and the old Guy Fawkes hat. Indeed my imagination was so wrought up, that twice when glancing towards the forest I could have sworn I saw the shape of a man flit a little way past the two trees where the hammock had swung; for the shadows there wore a greenish faintness of dusk with the pouring of the moon, and one's sight went a little way into the block of blackness. But the hour came round at last when it was time we

should endeavour to take some rest. Miss Grant reluctantly walked by my side to the entrance, looking down a little into the hatch as though her heart failed her.

"Indeed there is nothing to fear," said I.

"Oh, but it is like being buried alive," she exclaimed, descending nevertheless, but with a quickened breath. I lighted one of the wax candles and carried it to the inner room, where, wanting the convenience of a candle-stick, I stuck it in the mouth of a bottle, earnestly looking round me to see that all was well. The skylight lay open. I asked if I should close it.

"No," she exclaimed, quickly.

"But supposing it should come on to rain in the night," said I, "an electric storm say, with a West Indian *shower* pouring off the edge of it? Besides, the mosquitoes will find their way in."

"I must take my chance," she exclaimed. "If that glass were shut, I should feel as if I were buried alive."

"Then good-night. May God bless you, and send you refreshing sleep and sweet dreams,"

said I, bringing her cold white hand to my lips. "My bed will be there," I added, pointing to the threshold of her door, "so that literally nothing could enter this room without treading on my body."

She glanced at the skylight, and looked at me wistfully, as though she would have me linger yet. I lifted my hat and quitted the strange chamber, carefully drawing the curtain after me.

The moon rode high over the island ; her radiance lay upon the skylight, and on the hatchway, as I may call it, and light enough came sifting in to enable me to see without a candle. I gathered the dry stuff I had collected for a mattress close against the shawl that hung from the doorway of the inner room, and made me up a bed of rugs, with a rolled-up coat or two for a bolster. I then carefully looked to my pistols and placed them on the floor, one on either hand of me ; which done, I threw off my boots, removed my light camlet jacket, and lay down. The skylight was open, but I needed air, for the atmosphere was close with the furnace-brickwork that still retained

the warmth of the fires which had been kindled in it during the day, and since Miss Grant's skylight lay open too, it mattered little that mine should be so ; for, should a downpour happen in the night—and I knew of old what a downpour in these parallels meant—the rooms would be flooded very nearly as swiftly with one as with both windows to let the wet in, specially with the entrance gaping like the mouth of a funnel to vehicle any deluge that might come. I lay down, I say, but not to sleep. I could hear Miss Grant moving with something of restlessness in her pacing, then all was still in her room ; and I heartily hoped she would soon forget our situation and her fears in slumber. The stillness was deep. I had anticipated a pretty deep hush in these under-sand cells, but the reality was oppressive beyond any kind of breathless repose that I could have imagined. Not so much as the hum of a mosquito stirred upon the hearing ; the metallic-like chirruping outside was a little storm of noise in its way, I knew ; but not an echo of it penetrated underground, spite of the open skylight. I lay musing upon our extraordinary

condition. It was difficult to credit that my beautiful companion and I were finding shelter and seeking rest in what was practically as much a grave as any hole in the earth that should in God's own time receive our bodies. Up above in the moonlight, with the spread of the sea widening out black from the shaft of silver in its heart, the trees overhead, the stars beyond, the innumerable voice of insect life in the air, our condition was real enough to the imagination—heart-breakingly real indeed ; but down here it was like some wild fancy, one of those strange dreams which hover in the brain betwixt waking and sleeping. Besides, it was a time and an occasion too for whatever was superstitious in the soul to creep into self-assertion away from the clutch of reason. I don't know that I should have felt nervous but for the memory of the face I had seen ; but I confess that I was more uneasy than I should have been willing to admit to Miss Grant, as I lay in the dim, ashen-tinctured atmosphere of that underground apartment, running my eye from the grim memorials of sabre and musket on the wall, to the old table over against my head,

on to the short corridor going black to the square of faintness that overhung the extremity, thence to the skylight, through which I could see a hundred soft and trembling stars.

However, after lying awake for a good long while, I fell into a vein of dozing, rambling thinking, the sure precursor of sleep, more like the shadows of dreams flitting before me than the presentments of waking thoughts ; a sort of stupid confusion of pirates, mistily and so uselessly flitting about the chamber, with a few turtle mixed up amongst them, and God knows what besides ; saving that, though reason was faltering, I was sensible enough to know I should presently be fast asleep.

I was in this condition of mind, my eyes fixed upon the skylight, though the lids were drooping fast and I was scarce conscious of what I viewed, when I saw a shadow as of the hat that I had met with in the forest, as it seemed to me, overhanging the open space. The posture of this shadow was that of a man peering down. 'Twas unmistakable ; I could not be deceived. The dark outline was clear against the stars, and it was the head of a man

wearing just such a steeple-crowned hat as I had encountered, bending over and gazing down.

I was instantly startled into broad wakefulness. Brave I should be sorry to call myself, though I think there is no man whose nose I should hesitate to pull who called me otherwise to my face ; but at sight of that sugar-loafed hat and the motionless peering human shape revealed to a little past the shoulders, I must confess to having burst into a cold sweat. It was the being shocked perhaps out of the drowsiness into which I had sunk that made me think the thing a phantom for a minute or two. I lay stirless, softly sneaking my right hand to the pistol, by which time I had come to a sense of the reality of the vision ; but before I could point the weapon, being resolved to fire cost what it would, the hat vanished. Now, thought I, the fellow has been able to obtain a tolerable view of this interior, and concludes I am sound asleep. His next step will be to come below !

I rose very lightly, being anxious not to disturb Miss Grant, and holding both pistols in my hands, I stepped in my stockings over to

the corner made by the projection of the furnace, where I crouched in the deep shadow that lay upon this part of the room, with my head lifted over the edge of the brickwork to enable me to command the entrance. Hardly had two minutes elapsed when I spied the hat again overhanging the skylight, but it did not offer such a mark as I could hope to *pot* from the place I stood in; so I continued to wait and watch. I could hear no sound, not the faintest crunch of a footfall upon the grit of the sand outside; but the quick breathing of the fellow was as audible as the beating of my heart in my ear, and as full a warrant as I could have asked that the thing was no ghost. The peering and meditative posture of the hat was preserved whilst I might have counted twenty; the shadow then disappeared. Now, thought I, will he return to the forest, or will he descend? Is he alone, or was the second apparition that of a companion wearing such another hat as the first had on? Suddenly I saw the sort of film of light that came clouding a little way into the corridor out of the hatch die out, and in an instant, with the swiftness of a leap almost,

the man was in the room. Softly as the footfall of a cat I got my pistol to bear upon him, but before I could pull the trigger he fell upon all fours, and a moment after I heard the clank of the bell grasped and overset. I sprang out of my hiding place, took full aim, and fired. The explosion made a thunder in the room. By the flash of the powder I saw the creature spring to the height of the ceiling whilst he uttered the most piercing scream that ever broke from mortal lips. The wild cry was echoed by a shriek in Miss Grant's room. I was half-crazy with rage and consternation, and flinging down the pistol I had fired, I levelled the other at the creature as he ran, dropping to the earth with one hand as he went in staggering leaps through the dark passage, and sent a second ball at him. The report was followed by another ear-piercing shriek horribly human. The curtain behind me was dashed aside, and Miss Grant stepped forth.

“What is it?” she cried.

The silver mounting of the pistol she held gleamed in her grasp as she raised her hand in addressing me.

“ I have shot something,” I exclaimed ; “ but whether man or beast I know not. Be it what it will, it has two bullets in its body. Let me have your pistol.”

I took it from her, and walked right to the steps which led above. There was nothing in the passage. I sprang into the open and looked around. The moonlight lay bright as day, the shadows of the trees sloping eastwards black as indigo where they rested on the sand. Within a stone’s throw of me was a dark object that looked like a small tortoise at the distance whence I viewed it. I approached and found it to be the hat that I had found in the forest. Miss Grant had followed me noiselessly, and I only knew that she was at my side by her breathing, the sound of which was not a little startling to me, bending down as I was to examine the hat.

“ Look, Mr. Musgrave ! ” she exclaimed, in one of her tragic whispers, “ *that* must be the man you shot.” She pointed with her white arm to the stretch of sand some distance past the opening that led to our cells, where I instantly observed a figure prone and motion-

less. In a moment I was making towards it, but with increasing bewilderment as I advanced; for as the outline stole out clearer and clearer in the icy radiance to my steps. I witnessed features which gradually but surely changed my alarm into a conflict of quite other emotions. The body lay on its back; its half-closed eyes looked straight up at the stars out of a brown and puckered face ringed with white whiskers; its arms were stretched out in the posture of a crucified person.

“It has three legs!” cried Miss Grant.

“By thunder, no!” I exclaimed, bursting into a wild laugh; “that is no leg, but a great tail! As I hope to go to heaven, ’tis a huge Madagascar ape!”

CHAPTER II.

A GALE OF WIND.

THE murder was now out, the mystery made very plain indeed, and the solution, like most others which come to a man in this life, looked so simple that one seemed half a fool for not having hit upon it at once. How this great monkey happened to be in the island who is to say? Not very likely, I think, that he was born here, unless he happened to be an only son, and both parents dead. Most likely he had belonged to a ship, and been cast away with the crew many years before. I do not know how long monkeys live, but this fellow, as he lay in the moonlight with his teeth gleaming in the grin of death out of the wrinkled leather of his face, framed by a pair of long snow-white whiskers, seemed eighty years old.

It was likely that he had belonged to a ship because of his bell-ringing trick, and then his wearing that Guy Fawkes hat looked as if he had been bred in his youth to a knowledge of clothes.

But be this as it may, the bell was rung no more. I pitched the hat into the sea and met with no other ; no wild convulsed face looked at me out of the high greenery, and the skylight remained unshadowed by any outline of sugar-loaf headgear in peering and hearkening posture.

Miss Grant and I talked late into the night, for tame as the issue proved, it was, I can tell you, hotly exciting whilst it lasted. But we got some rest towards the small hours, sleeping well into the morning, and then my first business was to drag the monkey down to the creek where the sand was steep with a depth of three fathoms to the shelf of it ; and with no further service than a few sea-blessings upon its head for the worry and alarm it had caused me, I rolled the body overboard, guessing that it would presently float seawards, where John Sharkee lay in readiness to provide it with a sure tomb.

And now for three weeks nothing that I need tease you with happened ; no such incident, I mean, as that of my discovery of the underground rooms, or the midnight tolling, and the sight of the hat on the bell-frame afterwards ; but it grew into a bitter distressful time for us as the hours swelled into days, and the days rolled into weeks, and found us still imprisoned upon this island, not utterly hopeless indeed of deliverance, though we presently scarce dared to expect it. God knows that never a shipwrecked eye kept a steadfaster look-out for vessels than I did ; but though during those three weeks I reckoned that I had sighted ten sail in all, none of them ever grew to more than a glimmer of white upon the distant line ; so showing and so fading—worthless to us as though they had been no more than the wreaths of steam or little curls of white vapour which they resembled. Only twice indeed did I fire my faggots and make a smoke. The distance the vessels showed at made my heart hopeless, and I could scarce step a pace from one shadow to another through the roasting dazzle of sand without asking myself how it must have fared with us

had there been no fresh water on the island. For food, there were turtle and craw-fish in abundance, along with an occasional paroquet which I would knock over with Miss Grant's pistol, the precisest little weapon of the kind I had ever handled. We brought at the start no great relish to these birds, but they proved dainty eating for people in our situation, when carefully plucked, cleansed, and boiled. We found a plentiful growth of plantains, citrons, whose juice mingled with water furnished us with a refreshing drink, wild oranges, and a small delicious fruit resembling the Australian passion fruit, but its proper name I do not know. There were, as you have heard, a large stock of fish-hooks in the little black chest in Miss Grant's room. I had no means of pushing out seawards to any distance to fish, so between us Miss Grant and I manufactured lines of twisted linen, which we laid up to strengthen the least rotted portions of the small stuff I found in the chest ; then attaching a sinker to the baited hook, I buoyed it to a little piece of timber, the sinker going about two fathoms below the surface, and let the apparatus drift

out from the mouth of the creek to the end of the line which I held in my hand, and in this manner I caught a great number of fish, incredibly various in hues, shapes, and sizes ; some of them coming out of the water like flashes of dark gold light, others green as emeralds, others with half-a-dozen of brilliant colours glowing upon them as though fantastically painted, yet with exquisite cunning, by an artist. It was merciful that we did not poison ourselves with some of these fish, for we ate all we took, if I except a great bloated, spotted thing with a green back, fins like a man's arm amputated at the elbow, and a white breast freckled with sulphur-coloured spots. Even this creature I think we should have devoured but for its ugliness, yet nothing that we ate hurt us. Indeed our health continued very good, which I attribute to our being lodged out of the touch of the night air, to our exposing ourselves as little as possible to the sun, and to the sweetness and purity of the water we drank.

As you may suppose, it was impossible for such an association as ours not to deepen in me

the sentiment that had been excited so long before as the first week or two of our being aboard the Iron Crown. We were hour after hour together ; it was indeed almost only during those intervals when I would walk to the hummock to take a view of the sea that we were separated. My couch of leaves and rugs was at the threshold of her doorway. All through the night there was nothing betwixt her and me but the curtain I had contrived. In the deep hush of that strange interior, made solemn to my mind by thoughts of the grave, and sanctified to my imagination by the presence of the beautiful woman it sheltered, I would lie listening to the regular respirations of her slumber, disturbed at long intervals by some low melodious flutterings of speech breaking from her dreaming lips, and sometimes I would catch my name clear in these unconscious utterings ; and it was significant to me almost to an emotion of grief that I would notice myself hearkening for the name of her lover, and smiling when her babbling died out in a long sigh, followed on by peaceful regular breathing. It seemed a sort of mocking of fate, so to speak, to think of *love*, to

be sensible of the stir of the emotion, in such a situation as ours was ; but then, unhappily, it was no more to be helped than the thirst that would come upon me, or the yearning after our deliverance. That I concealed from her what was in my mind I cannot say. I strove most strenuously to do so, not only from love of my own honour, and because it would have wrung me to the heart to have been the occasion of a pang in her, but because I instinctively feared—indeed let me say I clearly foresaw—that should she guess at my thoughts of her, a sort of alienation must follow, a condition of inexpressible embarrassment to us both, banded as we were in intimate partnership by our imprisonment. I could foretell pity, shyness, reproach in her ; an estrangement which would be as a perpetual wound to my pride ; a cessation of our free communion, to end maybe in a mere bleak civility of intercourse ; the inspiration of our requirements rather than of her desire. You will think me unduly sensitive ; yet when I look back I cannot but think that I rightly governed myself in the matter. If ever this fair and charming woman was under my protection she

was so now, with infinitely deeper claims on me than she could have had in our darkest hours aboard ship. Her very defencelessness, methought, was God's own protest in her against the lightest exhibition of passion that would give her uneasiness. If I was in love with her, it was for my honour as a gentleman to wait until our escape should strengthen her womanhood by the surroundings of a civilized life to tell her so, or enable her to conjecture my mind. Thus I reasoned with myself, and so reasoning I acted ; but I must admit the weakness of a deep wish in me at times to interpret her by looking into her eyes. She was heavily subdued, as you will conceive, by the conditions of our life, otherwise I witnessed no change in her manner. There was nothing to be divined from what she said, by what she did, or what she looked, and no gaze was ever more eloquent, more darkly beautiful with spirit, thought, and intelligence.

But to proceed, for this threatens to become mere parish chatter.

For days and days the weather had been lovely and quiet, the sun regularly going down behind the island rayless in the whirl of his

crimson haze, the evening opening to his descent soft, dark, and fragrant as the heart of a violet ; nights of marvellous stillness, saving always the island voices, with the firmament that seemed to hover like a sheet of silver dim in places, so lustrous was the star-shine, so thick the dust of the constellations when the moon was gone and left the heavens uneclipsed from sea-line to sea-line ; with calm blue dawns dazzling fast into tropical glory, and then the long, brassy, fiery day, and the silent sea sparkling with the tingling glitter of new tin under the soaring luminary. At intervals a cloud would show no bigger than a man's hand, like a burst of steam from a boiler on the horizon, and then melt out into the blue air as though the heat within the cincture of which our island was the centre were so fierce as to absorb the substance of it ere it could float to its shoulders.

But one afternoon, three weeks after the date on which we had been set ashore, there came a change. That a shift of weather was at hand one might have gathered by the general uneasiness expressed by the life on the island. The birds' whistling had a subdued note, the

parrots' scream was softened somewhat, the ear detected a hint of agitation in the peculiar snoring noise made by the tree-toad ; there was a constant hurried flight of feathered things amongst the trees, the continued restless glint of coloured plumage darting like prismatic rays amongst the leaves. The insects bit fiercely, and the universal humming rose with a sharp note of anger and fear in the shrilling that was new to me. Miss Grant told me that these queer symptoms of disquiet might be prophetic of an earthquake, and certainly the intolerable heat of that day should have led one to expect such a thing. Indeed the sultry air seemed to press down upon one with a sensible weight, and with the stifling breath of the atmosphere of a hot oven.

When I saw the blue thickening into a kind of dinginess of no colour that I could give a name to, with a rounding of the sea at the edge of it like a lifting up of its flood, though it would be no more than the shadowing it got from the sky, with a sort of airy whitish gleam the whole horizon around, I thought to myself, if a tropical outburst is to happen, it is as well

that I should turn to at once and provide that all things under hatches shall be as snug as possible. So I fell to work to bring up the hatch-cover I had knocked to pieces, and shipped the fragments into a compact form over the opening, regretting that ever I had been fool enough to break it up. I then took a view of the skylights and mused a while over them; for, thought I, when they are shut, the sweep of wind and wet will speedily load them with sand, and then, with the entrance covered by the hatch, how is fresh air to enter these cells so that we shall be able to breathe? But it was imperative any way that the skylight should be closed, if, supposing the rain to fall heavily, the rooms were not to be swamped out of hand. I tried to consider how the buccaneering folks who had dug out the place dealt with an extremity of this kind, but was quite at a loss. Some trick they must have had, but it was above my art. I conferred with Miss Grant, and she was for facing the approaching tempest above. I told her that she must know more about tropical weather than I did, but that it seemed to me, if a West Indian tempest was threatened by the

gathering gloom, we were bound to perish if we did not shelter ourselves from it; and what shelter was there on the island save the vaults in which we lived.

“Yes,” she exclaimed, “but should they be flooded we must be drowned; for how shall we escape when the water is pouring in?”

Well, I understood this danger clearly, and was fairly nonplussed; and indeed how we should have managed, had the weather fulfilled its threat of tropic storm, I don't know. But very fortunately for us, a little before sundown the sulky dimness above shaped out into bodies of clouds heading south, with a sea-board full of well-defined shaggy heads, showing rusty to the sun, lifting fast in the north. Then it came on to blow, in small moans at first, a sullen swell leagues in length rolling along the course taken by the clouds and swinging silent to the island, where it burst in thunder with a roaring, foamless slide of it past the eastward-facing beach. But the moans quickly grew into the hooting and whistling of a brisk wind increasing yet, even as one listened to it, to tempestuous bellowing high aloft, with a wild flying of the dry

white sand, a fierce stooping and shearing of the trees, through which the wind seethed with a sound as of red-hot hissing, and a magnificent smoky scarlet that put a lining of blood whilst it lasted to the shadows flying athwart the angry beams. I saw, or hoped perhaps, that there was to be no rain, and that was comforting ; but the weight of wind, and the blinding flashing into the eyes of the flying coral grit soon forced us below ; though not before we had seen enough of the suddenly enraged ocean to stamp a memory fit to last for life. You almost feared for the island, so thunderous was the blow of the surge, so scaring the sight of the pallid bodies of foam sweeping in shrouds of faintness—like the colour of the brow of the snow-cloud discharging its white burthen to the tempest—through the evening gloom that rapidly followed the sun's going. The wind struck the cheek salt and heavy with spray, which swept through the lashed and writhing trees with the crackling, rending, and tearing noise of storm after storm of bullets volleying into them.

In this way the sand became in a very short time too wet to fly, nor was the briny showering

so heavy as to excite in us the least apprehension of being flooded by it. With the skylights closed and the hatch-cover on we were snug enough in our underground chambers. As for fresh air, more than we needed came blowing down through the cracks of the cover I had broken up, and whose fragments I had put together over the orifice. But though we were sheltered, and safer maybe than we should have been in a house, having regard to the wind only, there was to be no rest for us that night. The mere fear that the tempest might play us the familiar tropic trick of ceasing all at once with a driving up of the hindmost clouds into a compact blackness of vapour, breaking on a sudden into a mighty roar of rain heavy enough to swamp a city to the very roof of its cathedral, was enough to keep us wide awake ; for should such a downpour happen, there would be nothing for it but to instantly rush into the open, before the rooms filled, and perish—if perish we must—in sight of the sky, instead of drowning like rats in a hole !

'Twas as wild a night as ever I remember ; the glass frames above were soon coated with

wet sand, but the occasional flash of lightning darting out of some rushing cloud glanced with a violet glare in the passage through the chinks in the cover ; but if ever thunder followed it was out-bellowed by the hurricane, or swept by the headlong rush of the blast clean out of hearing. Our cells hummed to the elemental torment for all the world as though there was an endless procession of locomotives dragging heavy trains of cars over the island. We had husbanded our slender resources so carefully that we had a few wax candles left, and most grateful were we this night for the light one of them gave us. Without it we must have sat in total blackness throughout those long and raging hours.

“ It is the proper sort of storm,” said I on one occasion to Miss Grant, “ to blow vessels ashore here. It should be an ill wind indeed if it blows us no good. What an imprisonment is ours ! Enough to make one so wicked as to pray for a shipwreck, on chance of the sight of a survivor, or of a boat washing ashore, or material to help us to get away.”

“ It should frighten a poor shipwrecked sailor

horribly, I think," she said, "to cleanse that glass up there and look through, and see an illuminated room with a man and woman sitting in it."

She gave a little hysteric laugh, bringing her hands to her eyes.

It was a very nightmare of an experience then to my mind, and her beauty was powerless to soothe or soften it. There were three weeks of this life working in us, and had I been alone, though I should have kept my senses sound as a bell to this moment, I believe I must have fallen mad as a thirst-crazed sailor before the dawn broke. Expectation rose into positive agony with waiting for the thunderous subterranean humming to cease, for *then* the rain might come, and the necessity of carrying my companion into the open to face the black deluge, and whatever else might happen there, was only less frightful to my overstrained nerves, than the fancy of such a quick flooding of these chambers as would give us no time to escape from them. A man should wield a pen above my power to put such a picture of us and of this room before you as might make you witness

it even dimly. I see at this moment the candle stuck in a bottle, with the remains of our poor supper of such odds and ends as we had been able to collect still upon the table—as mocking a regale as ever eye rested upon!—shadows like the reflection of human forms moping and mowing on walls and ceiling to the slant of the flame stirred by small hurryings of draught coming out of the black corridor; the black shapes of the old muskets and hangers, the doorway yawning past the half-drawn curtain, courting the glance to the dungeon gloom within—the whole gathering a preternatural element to my imagination, stirred to its depths as it was by the trembling of the earth to the shocks of the sea upon its northern board, from the look of wild beauty my companion's eyes got from the candle-flame, as they showed dark to it out of her face, whitened to the very complexion of a spirit by our vigil and the thoughts that worked in her.

All through that night, down to an hour past dawn, it blew a fierce and heavy gale of wind, never rising, however, to the hurricane force that is to be expected in weather of this kind

hereabouts. We knew by the cessation of the humming noise in our rooms that there was tranquillity overhead, but the skylights were so thickly coated with sand that no ray of light broke through, and the change in the weather was only to be gathered by listening. It took me some while to break my way out through the entrance in consequence of the heavy plastering of the hatch-cover by the wet soil hove by the wind upon it ; and seeing that our dwelling-place must have been air-tight for some time, it was strange that we found no inconvenience from breathing the atmosphere. But then, to be sure, the chambers were tolerably big, and there were but two of us to breathe in them, with but a single candle-flame besides. I battered the hatch with one of the muskets, and so forced it open, and on emerging found a sullen, wild, though silent morning, dense masses of white cloud hanging, brooding fashion, over the sea, with their violet shadows lifting up to them, as it were, great lagoons of blue sky between, the sun in one of them shining with a fiery and piercing light.

Indeed the wind was all gone ; but there was

a great swell still running which made the sea a noble and majestic sight. The polished flowing of the vast folds caught the sunlight as they rolled, till under the luminary the ocean seemed to be formed of sweeping hills of molten silver. The gale had played havoc with the island ; many trees lay fallen, and the weather side of the little forest showed as though the branches there had been trimmed by the shears of countless gardeners during the night. But the insects and flies had come off with their lives. Their concert was prodigiously shrill, with a note of thanksgiving in it, Miss Grant thought ; but it sounded to me more like an impertinent hymn of triumph, the clamour of multitudinous insignificance, as one might say, over the defeat of the mighty forces of nature. We stood eagerly looking towards the sea and along the sands far as our sight could trace them, not knowing what might have happened during the long, dark, howling hours ; but there was nothing to be seen saving the mighty, brilliant blue welter sending its brows washing to the edge of the distant sky. We then made for the hummock, and took another view

thence ; but the prospect was barren of wreck ; not a glimpse of the wet flash of a fragment of black timber wallowing—no hint of any sort of disaster at sea.

I will not say I was disappointed, for I had scarce felt expectation ; but my sickness at heart was deep—never had it been deeper in those three weeks that we had spent upon this island—when I sent my gaze around the winding and waving horizon, and found no vaguest symptom of life in it outside its own ponderous turbulence. Down on the northern strand the surf was vast and glorious, with the bursting of the swell arching into giant breakers upon the beach. The giddy dazzle, the creaming splendour detained us. The prismatic, snow-white boiling, along with the cold thunder of the headlong and recoiling masses of water, were grateful beyond expression to every sense in us, coming now to loathe, as we did after many days of it, the stifling stagnation of the great plain. However, the swell of the sea soon flattens when there is no wind, and by noon the heave of the deep was languid enough, the clouds gone, saving a small,

pearl-coloured heap in the south, and here and there out at sea faint tricklings of air delicately smearing the glassy blue, like the tarnishing of moistened fingers upon a looking-glass.

The sight of the fallen trees raised an idle hope in me of manufacturing some sort of fabric out of them by which we might escape ; for we were now arrived at such a condition of hopelessness that, sooner than go on lingering in this island, which we dared no longer believe any vessel ever approached close enough to witness a signal of distress in the smoke of our fire, we thought it would be better to take our chance on the roughest contrivance we could put together, and launch. We had material to stitch into a sail, which, under Providence, might blow us within eyeshot of a ship. But it was not necessary to look long at the fallen timber to understand that, without help and without tools, it was as useless to us as the coral sand under our feet. What were we to do ? Was it the will of Heaven that we should end our days on this beautiful but most melancholy island ?

As we sat conversing, Miss Grant on a sudden

gave way. Never once during our imprisonment had she let fall a tear ; but now she broke down. She covered her face with her hands, wept most piteously, sobbing as if her heart were broken. If ever I had wondered whether I was in love with her, my doubts would have ended as I watched her in her grief, waiting for the first passion of her sorrow to spend itself before I addressed her. The natural timidity of a woman she had indeed exhibited on several occasions ; but taking our wild, miserable, most distressful experiences throughout, her spirit had shown clear, noble, heroic, and it was this fine character in her that made her sudden outbreak miserable to witness. One would have given little heed to such a display of emotion as this in a woman who had been fretful and mopish during our trials, with tears always at hand, and a weak heart aggravating with repinings. But here was a girl whose courage had proved superior to every demand made upon it ; in those darker and sterner experiences, I mean, which might well have caused the spirit of the stoutest-hearted man to shrink within him. The sweetness of her nature had never failed

her. Again and again had our gloomy underground haunt resounded with the gentle melody of her laughter, often uttered, as every instinct in me knew, for no other purpose than to cheer me ; and to see her giving way now——

I waited a little, and then I could no longer bear it. I took her hand and put it to my lips and fondled it, and said—but I know not what I said, only that I was sensible my secret had slipped from me. Whether she gathered the import of my words, whether indeed she even knew what I spoke, I cannot tell. The cloud passed presently, and she was again meeting my gaze with steadfast, shining eyes, the more brilliant they looked for the very tears she had wept. Well, thought I, everything that happens is for the best, we must believe ; yet for the rest of the day the memory that I had been hurried into saying more, much more, than I felt I ought to have addressed to her, haunted and bothered me ; but though I would eye her keenly, if furtively, and listen to her with an attention so strained that it could not have missed a single note in her utterance interpretable by my sensitiveness, I could no more have told, when the

night came and we had parted to take our rest, that she had heard or heeded what I had said to her, than I could have predicted what was to happen to us next day.

It was the morning of the twenty-first day of our captivity. I was awakened from a dream of my old home in England—a cheerful vision of an English landscape, with the soft May sky shining over budding hedgerows and the delicate green of spring vegetation—by the loud singing of a bird perched on a ledge of the open skylight, which I need hardly say I had long before purified of the sand that the storm had accumulated upon it. This singing had something of the note of a linnet in it, only very strong and piercing, and doubtlessly it was the melodious piping that set me dreaming of English meadows and woods, and the house in which I was brought up till I went to sea. I had passed a good night, felt strengthened and refreshed by the long rest, and at once kicked off my rug with the design of taking my usual morning plunge off the sand away round past the creek. All was quiet in Miss Grant's room. I climbed the steps, and found it a brilliantly

clear morning, roastingly hot after the pattern of the days here, the sea very calm, with a light swaying like a long sigh running through it, and a soft air floating languidly down out of the north, with just weight enough to put a trembling into the needle-like rays spiking off the edge of the sun's light in the water, as though the seams of his wake were ravelled. I cast a careless look around the ocean, thinking more of my bath, maybe, than what might be in view ; for this looking for ships had grown into a habit, and habit becomes mechanical. I then undressed and waded to the height of my hips, a depth I durst not exceed for fear of sharks, and after revelling for nigh half an hour in the cold blue swing of the little breakers, whose caressing foam sang to the ears like the seething of the froth of a sparkling wine, I stalked again on to the beach, dried, and fell to dressing myself.

Whilst I was thus occupied I suddenly spied something black out upon the water, but how far off I could not tell. I took it to be the back of a shark at first, or the black spine of a porpoise that would round away out of sight in a minute ; then I thought it must

be a piece of wreck ; but as it seemed to me to be very slowly growing, I walked to a clump of trees to shelter me from the heat of the sun, and sat down to watch the thing. It was little more than a speck when I first sighted it, but after waiting some time, and observing that it increased in size, I could not question that it was approaching the island, and that it was either a boat or canoe impelled by human agency, for there was no sail to bring her along, though the faint breeze favoured her ; nor, though the tide might be helping her a bit, was the set of it swift enough to account for the thing's growth. I was gazing intently when I heard Miss Grant calling. I hallooed back, telling her to come to me. She arrived presently, exclaiming, as she approached, that she was growing alarmed by my long absence. I pointed to the object on the water.

“It must be a boat, I think,” I cried. “I am watching it—waiting to see what it means.”

She looked, instantly saw it, and cried, “Oh!” starting violently, with a quick clasp-

ing of her hands, and then, with her manner full of excitement, came and sat close beside me. "Oh, Mr. Musgrave, if it should prove a boat!"

"It *is* a boat; it is being rowed too. Look attentively, and you will see the glint, on the right hand side of it, of the wet blade of an oar lifting to the light."

"I see it!" she cried.

My mind was agitated beyond my capacity of expressing the commotion raised within me by the sight of the boat. I seized Miss Grant's hand with both mine, pressing it whilst I cried out in my transport that a chance had come, that we might now regard our deliverance as certain, that my frequent bitter, imploring prayers were heard at last, and we were now to be supplied with the means of escaping. The distress of the sea makes a very child of a man. I felt the tears which my eyes refused to distil scalding at my heart. One may bear up stoutly for days, for weeks, for months amid the misery of solitude; hope dying out in one to a mere spark amid the embers of dreams and expectations—I say one

may endure the heaviest afflictions the sea can heap upon the soul with a lion's spirit ; yet it will be strange if, when succour comes at last, one do not give way as a little child might.

Within three-quarters of an hour of my first catching sight of the minute speck, it had enlarged upon the calm white heave of the sea to the proportions of what was apparently a ship's quarter-boat, with a spot of red in her that puzzled me, a mast like a hair rising out of the black rounding of the gunwales, and an occasional gleam of oars wielded most languidly and intermittently, as though handled by a dying man. Indeed, I cannot convey how suggestive of distress was this slow and irregular motion of the oars, gatherable from the sparkle of them whenever the blades rose languidly from the blue surface. Presently I saw that what I had taken to be a spot of red in the boat was a soldier's jacket, and waiting yet a little while longer, I observed that the fellow was a negro. There was no other occupant of the boat to be seen. I ran down to the beach, followed by Miss Grant, to

motion the man to head for the beach at the head of the creek ; for small as the breakers were, it would have been madness to imperil so precious an object as the little fabric by grounding her amongst them. He evidently understood me, for he pulled a little with his left hand to point his boat according to my gestures, and then let go both oars to stand up, with his hands clasped above his head, and his face lifted as in a posture of entreaty to God, whilst his body reeled in such a way that I expected to see him go overboard. He next made certain signs, pointing to his mouth and then down into the boat, and then clasped his hands again, but I could not understand him. I shouted, to encourage him, continuing to point towards the creek, which would be visible to him, and presently he sat down and fell to his oars afresh, but rowing so weakly that it was miserable to watch him. He made shift, however, to bring the boat within a fathom or two of the head of the spit of sand that formed one side of the entrance to the creek ; then looking round, he got his port oar inboard out of the thole-pins, and had his

hand on the loom of the other, when he fell back and disappeared.

My terror lest the boat should drift away rendered me as reckless as if I had fallen crazy. Without giving a thought to the sharks that might be about, I waded into the water till it was out of my depth, then swam with the utmost fury, and after a few strokes caught hold of the gunwale, and with a hard spring rolled head over heels into the little fabric, and seizing the oar that lay jammed in the thole-pins, I headed the boat into the creek, and sculled her right fair to the gleaming round of the little inlet without so much as glancing at what lay inside the craft, till her forefoot was aground and I had leaped ashore.

CHAPTER III.

A STARTLING APPARITION.

THERE was a second man in the boat, a negro also. He lay dead in the bottom, a dreadful sight, naked to the waist, and clothed with a pair of sailor's old drill trousers, the right leg discoloured by many blood-stains. He was twisted, as though his spine was broken, with his breast partly turned towards the stern of the boat, whilst his knees, which were drawn up, pointed forwards, and his face stared straight up, the eyes open like dull glass, and the skin of that indescribable sort of greenish ashen hue which death contrives as a complexion for the dead black man. The other fellow was on his back, as he had fallen, with his head in the bottom of the boat, and his legs over the thwart. He still breathed, but I noticed the foam gather

ing upon his lips even as I looked on for a moment or two at this terrible picture. He was dressed in a soldier's or marine's coat, a cloth round about his loins, and his attenuated cucumber shanks naked ; an old ragged Scotch cap clung to his woolly head.

It would be impossible for me to tell you how this little ocean tragedy was heightened by the element of the grotesque in it. There was no sail in the boat, no breaker that might have held water, no hint of the miserable blacks having sailed or been blown away with so much as a bite of biscuit. The oars were scarcely more than paddles, and evidently had not belonged to the little fabric. She was black outside, painted white within ; clearly, as I had thought at the beginning, a ship's quarter-boat. The words *Prince William* were painted in small black letters on her stern, inside of her. Miss Grant overhung the craft in a posture of pity and horror.

“ This poor fellow in the bows is still alive,” she cried.

“ I see that he is,” said I ; “ we will help him in an instant ; but the value of this boat signifies

the worth of our lives, and we must make her a bit securer yet. Please pull at this rope as I pull."

I handed a bight of the line in the bows to her, and then put my hand on the gunwale at the head, and together we ran her another few feet out of the water, the wet keel and bottom of her slipping readily enough up the ivory-like grit of the sand. All this was done as swiftly as I can write it. I then jumped into the boat, and with some trouble, for he was an exceedingly heavy man, I raised the negro on to the thwart, and set his back against the mast. His head lolled upon his shoulder like that of a person hanging. He looked at me with a gleam of intelligence in the lift of his bloodshot eyes, and his lips moved, but the merest rattle of noise trembled through the foam that filled his mouth. He raised his hand and pointed to his throat.

"Why, of course!" cried I; "I must have been mad not to perceive it. The poor fellow is dying of thirst. Will you get some water, whilst I keep him propped up here?"

She was off in a bound like a stag, and in the

briefest imaginable time returned with a preserved meat-tin full of water, which I put to the negro's lips ; but the moment he tasted the cold of it against his mouth a frenzy seized him. He grasped the tin, throwing me from him with a jerk of his elbow that was like to have broken my back for me against the gunwale, and uttering a strange throaty cry that made one think of the yell of a hunted negro to the first leap of a bloodhound upon him, he drank the whole of the water at one draught—a full quart, as I should reckon, for the tin was a big one—let drop the vessel, flinging both his hands against his breast in the manner of a man furiously striking himself, stood bolt upright with a most mad and murderous look in his eyes as they met mine, ere they rolled right up till you saw nothing but the crimsoned whites of them, and then without a groan fell backwards across the other body and lay motionless.

I looked round at Miss Grant. “The draught has killed him, I fear,” said I.

She turned away her head with her hands over her eyes. I kneeled down and grasped the poor wretch's wrist that showed like a bit

of ebony forking out of the ragged sleeve of the red coat, but could feel no pulse. I then felt the arm of the man beneath him, designing to gather if *he* lived, but instantly twitched my fingers away from the clammy chill of the unmistakably dead flesh. I next soaked a handkerchief in salt water, plucked the Scotch cap off the head of the man who had fallen, and bathed his brows, but nothing followed. Once a movement as of muscular contraction went in a twitch through him, but the drop of the jaw told me all I needed to learn.

It was proper, however, that I should let him lie for a while to make sure that he was dead, and so I stepped ashore, and to still further secure this precious gift that had come to us, I carried the end of the painter, which was a good long length of coir rope, with the strands at the extremity showing that it had parted, to a tree which stood near the head of the creek, and secured it, then withdrew with Miss Grant to the shelter of some tufted heads of the cocoa to sit down and rest and think a little, and wait to observe if the man had actually expired.

My companion was greatly overcome. The

appearance of the negro, the white foam blanching his purple lips, and the short, stubborn hair under his nose and chin, the deeper horror that was put into his anguish by the absurdity of his apparel, the suddenness of his rising, the frightfulness of his collapse after he had drained the tin, with a swing of his hands to his heart, and the terrifying glare of his eyes, had proved so overwhelming a picture, with the unexpectedness on top of it besides of the body in the bottom of the boat, that she could scarcely raise her head ; shudders went through her, and I feared she would faint. Dreadful indeed it was, but the pitifulness of it, I am almost ashamed to say, was largely qualified to my mind by the transport of joy with which I viewed the boat, and understood that the time of our deliverance—a chance not to have been dreamt of two or three hours before—had come to us. It needed but a very brief spell of thinking to arrive at how this thing had happened. As one who had used the ocean, I could not fail to see it all clearly and quickly. In fact the parted strands of the coir line told me the tale. It was no painter, but such a rope as a boat would ride

astern of a ship by. It had broken, maybe, in the gale that had stormed over us two nights before, and the boat had gone adrift with these negroes in her, without a sail, with a rudder that was without a tiller, without water, and without food.

I waited for some time, and went to the boat to have another look at the man, and then his appearance persuaded me that he was dead. I was heartily grieved that this should have been so, for now that he lay at rest he showed, methought, a very bland and honest countenance, besides being of a most muscular and robust make ; and I felt that had he lived he might have proved of the utmost use to us, not as a pilot only, and as one perhaps who would know the situation of this island and its name, but as an assistant to help me to rig the fabric and navigate her. However, the truth lay before me ; and I suppose these hard island-experiences of ours having rendered me extremely prosaic and matter-of-fact in directions which at another time would have stirred all the sentiment in me to its depths, I determined to deal with the bodies without ado. So looking around me, I

picked up two good big stones, one of which I secured to the body of the man who had just died by the cloth round about his middle, whilst I attached the other to the second body in a manner I need not describe ; then without saying a word to Miss Grant, who sat watching me, clearly understanding my intentions, I unhitched the line from the tree, shoved the boat afloat, and sculled her clear of the creek where the water was deep, and tumbled the bodies overboard. It was as odious a bit of necessary work as ever mortal man could put his hand to. Hot as the sun was, the job made me feel as cold as if the chill of an English November night were upon me ; but I breathed more freely when I came to scull myself back to the shore, and when I stepped out with the end of the line in my hand, the earlier emotion of joy that the possession of the little craft had raised was again so active in my heart that I could scarce hold myself from singing like a boy at the top of my voice.

The morning was already advanced, and we had not yet broken our fast. I disliked the idea of turning my back upon the boat, lest on

my return I should find her gone. However, her forefoot being hard and fast ashore, and the line in the bows secured to the trees, it was impossible that the flow of the tide in the creek could play me any ugly tricks with her ; so we walked to our underground chambers to get some breakfast. I remember that our repast consisted of cold turtle-steak, plantains, sweet oranges, and a draught of cold water from the brook. The stock of provisions that had been set ashore with us was now exhausted ; we had a small quantity of spirits left, but the biscuit, tongues, preserved meat, and the like, were gone. Such a breakfast as ours was hardly fare to grow fat on, but it was wholesome and cool, and perhaps the sort of food that nature intended for the use of such human beings as should live in this island. It seems to me that the properest food for the people who inhabit a country is that which grows good for eating in it. Think of Broadwater's bill of fare, for instance, under such a dog-star as raged over the spot of earth we had been marooned upon ! —roast pork, massive sausages, turbid pea-soup, and the atmosphere all the while so hot that

you heard the spikes and leaves and tendons of the breathless vegetation quivering with tingling noises like the faint crackling in burnt paper, or in a sheet of tin curling to the roasting glare of a furnace ! I was mighty sick of turtle, and so was Miss Grant, but then it was a sort of meat in its way, and combined to make out a meal of the fruit, which was too delicious to weary us. One helped the other, and rendered the whole diet nutritious ; and maybe it was the simplicity of the fare that kept us well. We had been a long three weeks upon the island, yet Miss Grant had never once uttered a complaint of indisposition, whilst for my part I was almost unreasonably hearty in face of the heavy anxieties that weighed down my spirits.

“Thank God,” said I, with a look round the room, as I seated myself with my companion to our lenten meal, “we shall soon be taking a long farewell of this most melancholy haunt. It would have been strange indeed if that ill wind the other night blew us no good. A boat is the next best thing to a ship.”

“How strange it is,” she exclaimed, “to watch the working of the hand of fate ! Ashore,

it is an influence, a hidden government ; but at sea it is as apparent as a billow, or the rising of a cloud. One saw *that* in the boat as she approached. Fate was at her helm, and if I were an artist, and desired to materialize the conception of fate, and make it a visible thing, I should figure two people standing as we did, hopeless and imprisoned on this island, watching the boat coming out of the tiny blot it made in the far blue distance, gliding towards us without a swerve, with a final complete surrendering of itself to us, as it were, through the death of the two poor creatures in it." Her fine eyes shone to the high religious mood that was in her. " Little wonder," she continued, " that we should always be saying God's hand is most plain on the deep. The Ancient Mariner was not mad when he spied the little bark with Death on board gambling with a woman for human souls. The sea is to me so much more wonderful than the land, that I believe I could credit any amazing thing that should be related of it. Where else does one come closer to one's Maker ? Oh, Mr. Musgrave, it seemed to me like seeing the Divine finger itself when I

watched that boat growing upon the calm sea, urged, as we know now, by dying hands."

She shuddered, and pressed her fingers to her temples. She had been overtaxed, nor was the horror wrought in her by the incident of the morning to be soothed by the deep excitement that the opportunity for escaping from this island brought with it. Hysteria, I thought, was bound to dog the heels of such moralizing as she had started on; so there was nothing for it but to be blunt and prosaic, though, but for the fear I had that the humouring of the mood she was in would be bad for her, I could have listened all day. It was not so much what she said as the thoughts which lay behind her words, which spoke in her face, making her beauty eloquent with the rich fancies flushing to her delicate cheeks, and flashing a brighter light yet into her eyes.

"We shall have to go to work briskly," said I; "if all were prepared I would start at once."

She came back to herself with an effort, and brought her hands from her white brows with a faint smile, as if she understood what was in my mind concerning her.

“What is to be done, Mr. Musgrave, that I may know my share ?” she asked.

“Well, first of all we must victual the boat,” said I ; “we have bottles enough for the storing of fresh water, and you can do a useful hour’s work by hunting for the corks which we have drawn and thrown away, and fitting them to the bottles afresh. For food we must be content with the handsomest stock of craw-fish, fruit, and turtle that we can contrive. The boat wants a tiller. *That* is easily managed. She also wants a sail, which we shall have to manufacture out of your shawls. I must likewise make a yard for the sail, which may be got from a bough off one of the fallen trees. This done, our business will be to embark and head away west.”

“It is a little boat for so great a sea,” she said, in a low voice.

“Ay,” said I, “but then the film of land that was visible from the cross-trees of the Iron Crown is not too far distant for her to fetch, and it will be mighty odd indeed if that streak of blue haze which the men talked about be not an inhabited island, with houses to lodge in, and the

means of proceeding to Jamaica, which can't be far distant ; whence our next departure will be for Rio, and for Alexander."

She looked down suddenly, with the pearl of her teeth showing over the under-lip she slightly bit, then her eyes sought mine again with a soft gaze so full of inquiry that my heart seemed to stop for a breath, as though to catch the words that must follow her look ; but she did not speak. I jumped up.

" I must go to work now," cried I ; " in fact it frightens me to think of the boat, lying half dry as she is, being unwatched."

She rose too, with the air of one starting from deep thought. " My business then," said she smiling, " is to look for corks, and fit them to the bottles ? "

" If you please," said I.

For the rest of the day I worked very hard, stripped to my trousers and shirt, with my wide straw hat to shelter me, scarce intermitting my labour but to eat and drink, and obtaining quite fortitude enough out of the prospect of getting away from this island with Miss Grant, to enable me to defy the intense heat. I found amongst

the fallen trees the very bough to serve my turn, and without much difficulty I severed it with my little saw, trimmed it of its leaves, and proportioned it to the size of the required yard. I also cut a tiller for the boat. This work I was able to accomplish under the shelter of the trees. Miss Grant possessed several shawls of different textures and colours, and when she had collected the bottles, and gathered what corks there were to find, I set her tacking some of these shawls together into the shape of a sail, which she managed by perforating them with a bodkin, and then connecting them with tape, of which she had a little parcel. She made no trouble over mutilating her shawls, though I cannot but think that the first thrust of her bodkin into them must have caused her a pang. I cut off a short length of the coir-rope, and got yarns enough out of it to convert into as many robands as were necessary to connect the head of our queer sail to the yard. There was still plenty of line left for a tack and sheet and halliards, which I rove through a sheave in the head of the mast. My impatience gave me very great energy indeed. We had a good

supply of fresh turtle, which needed boiling, and this, with other matters which it would only weary you to specify, gave my fair companion plenty to do. I was resolved not to quit the island without being well stocked with food, for should it come on to blow from the westwards, I foresaw that our sail would not help us, that we should not be able to lay up to the wind more than six or seven points, so that we should stand to be blown away into the Atlantic eastwards, where we might spend days without view of a ship. My hope was too high perhaps to suffer me to contemplate such a probability as this with the least notion of its coming to pass, but my seafaring instincts governed me without my perhaps being very sensible of their influence, and I schemed, in a mechanical sort of way almost, so to provision the boat that you might have thought we intended to sail to England.

When the cool of the evening came, I plucked some hundreds of plantains and oranges, which I carefully stowed away in the little lockers aft that served as seats in the boat's stern, and I then fired a torch and waded into the sea for

craw-fish in the manner I have before described, meeting with a more plentiful harvest than had at any other time happened to me, insomuch that I had to give up stooping and throwing them to Miss Grant through sheer aching of my back, though the sandy bottom was still black with the dusky, lizard-like shapes of the creatures crawling into the sheen, when I extinguished my torch to step ashore. I also provided the boat with a stock of cocoa-nuts, but I never could discover a single turtle's egg, spite of my earnest exploring of the sand for several nights running during those three weeks.

We were wearied rather than sleepy when the darkness was deepening into midnight. There was a young moon in the sky, with a wire-like waving of silver under her in the glooming sea, that spread very darkly to the stars. I had still several bundles of cheroots left, and lighting one of them, I brought our camp-stools close down to the wash of the ocean, where the sand stretched like ivory glimmering to the dusk, for the cool of the atmosphere upon the water, and to get away

from the trees, in whose shadows the suffocating air of the day seemed to linger as though imprisoned. This was to be our last night on the island, and neither of us could think yet a while of shutting ourselves up underground. The phosphorescence of the water was shown by the light-green flashings which broke from each little purring breaker, as it melted into yeast and seethed soft as snow up the coral strand. But the ocean lay too silent and still for the fires to show themselves out upon its breast, if it were not that here and there at intervals you spied a greenish, smoke-like burst, as though some huge jelly-fish were shining under the surface, in the black brow of the silent swell that ran without sound and without break. The outline of our boat stood clear like a sketch in ink against the sand on the other side of the creek.

“We shall have much to tell,” said I, “when we are released from this place; more than many will think credible, I dare say. ’Tis almost like some old Arab’s yarn, this marooning of a young man and a lady, the old piratical lair underground yonder, the incident of the

monkey, and strangest of all, at least to my mind, the arrival of that boat there this morning with its tragic burden of dead and dying blacks. What will Alexander think?"

"If our meeting is much longer delayed," she answered, "he will think us lost."

"What grief for him, poor fellow!" said I; "but then, you know, the meeting will be the sweeter for its unexpectedness."

She made no answer; nor indeed was I much surprised by her silence. In truth, I had grown somewhat accustomed to a reserved attitude in her whenever I spoke of her sweetheart. However, I was in the humour, I cannot say why, I am sure to twang this chord just a little longer.

"Now," said I, "as to-morrow will see us under way—and the night, please God, safely on board ship, or within view of the lights of a little town in some island hidden behind the sea-line—I feel equal to talking a bit freely, Miss Grant. I have not set eyes on Alexander for years. He was a fine, handsome young fellow when at sea with me; always bold enough to excite my admiration; but since then

his courage seems to have increased. Do I admire it in its excess? I will not say so. The emotion it excites is one, I fear, of supreme wonderment only."

The moonlight was thin, but I could see her looking at me by it, with a little contraction of her white brows as evidence of the intensity of her gaze. "Some satirical fancy about Alexander has occurred to you?" she exclaimed.

"No, Miss Grant, nothing of the sort, on my honour."

"What is this courage of his that you wonder at?"

"The astonishing pluck he showed in confiding you to my care." She did not or would not understand. "Here am I," I continued, "a young man, for days and days in the society of a lady of whose charms he has proved himself very sensible indeed." She uttered a soft laugh scarcely above her breath. "Now, would not my cousin, as a young man himself, conclude that it could be scarcely possible for me to be so incessantly with you without—without—well now, what I mean to say is, without my falling in love?"

“He would not think of such a thing, Mr. Musgrave.”

“Oh, I fancy he would. A thought of the kind is bound to occur, and it is this triumphing of hope in him over what must lie at his heart with the strength of a conviction, that—”

I was arrested by her suddenly clutching at my hand ; her swift *fierce* grasp, as I thought it for the instant, almost took my breath away. “Heaven forgive me !” I mentally ejaculated, “I have aroused the Spanish blood in this woman. I—I—”

“Look, Mr. Musgrave !” she exclaimed, in a tone that thrilled to my ear with the fear in it, “what is *that* ?”

Her face was turned towards the creek, and following the direction of her glance, I observed the figure of a man standing a little on this side of the spot where our luggage had been deposited by the boat’s crew. He was clear of the shadows of the trees, and it was bright sand where he stood, and in the light of it lifting into the atmosphere he resembled a statue cut in ebony. He was motionless save for the occasional raising of his hand to his mouth

from time to time, as of a man taking a bite at something in his fist.

"Gracious mercy!" I exclaimed, a little above my breath, "not another monkey, I hope. The deuce is in this island. But he is too big surely even for a baboon."

"It is a man!" whispered Miss Grant, "and a black man too."

"There must be another boat come ashore," said I.

I stood staring a little, waiting to see whether he would advance, and what he meant to do. My heart beat fast. It would be impossible to express to you how startling was the apparition of that black figure. The suddenness and unexpectedness of the apparition was rendered the more alarming by the faintness of the moonlight. Standing where he was, the brilliance of the full orb would have interpreted him; but though he stood jet-like upon the sand, he yet seemed to mingle with the dusk in a visionary sort of way, and this blending of the blackness of him with the gloom caused him to appear as phantasmal as though he were the veritable shade of some negro anciently

murdered for the sentinelling by his spirit of hidden treasure in the place.

“Are there others about, I wonder?” said I. I sent a swift look towards the forest and past it, but all was motionless. I bent my ear with the fancy of catching the notes of voices beyond where the man stood, suspecting that his boat had arrived off the western sand; but no sound of the kind penetrated the distracting shrilling of the crickets.

“He is watching us!” exclaimed Miss Grant.

It was time to end this. In fact the more one stared at the dusky shape, with its rising and falling arm, the more one stood to grow afraid of it.

“Hallo there!” I sang out, walking a little way towards the figure, “who are you, and where have you come from?”

No answer was returned, but the figure moved uneasily, as if uncertain how to act. I hailed again, still advancing towards him, Miss Grant keeping close by my side; and then he approached us, but very slowly, whether through physical weakness or fear I could not

say. He was sufficiently close now to enable me to make out that he was a negro, and I was sensible at sight of him of a sickening chill coming into me, though at that moment certainly I could not have accounted for the sensation. A wild fancy entered my head, working almost like a touch of insanity there, that I had seen the man before. Was it the build of him? Was it his gait? I could not say. He was still too far distant to enable me to see what clothes he wore, if indeed he were dressed; but I remember coming to a stand with a coldness about my forehead as though some icy air were fanning me, whilst I let fly my breath with a sound that came very near to a cry. On a sudden Miss Grant screamed out, stepping in a terrified way backwards, then coming to me again and clutching my arm.

“It is a ghost!” she cried; “it is one of the men you buried to-day. Look at the soldier’s coat on him—at the white cloth under it!”

He was now near enough to render these features unmistakable. The red of his ragged jacket stole out ashen to the wan light; round

his loins was the cloth to which I had secured the stone I had sunk him by. Nothing was wanting to him but his Scotch cap, and that I knew he would not possess, as I had removed it to bathe his head, whilst on noticing it that afternoon lying in the bottom of the boat, I had chucked it overboard into the creek. I stood stock still, as though some blast of lightning had struck me dead. Very distinctly indeed do I recollect the sensation of the stirring of the hair upon my head, an effect I had once looked upon as a mere poetic imagination, beyond the reach of the extremest form of terror in real life. The dew started from my brows, and my hands turned as wet as though I had lifted them dripping from a basin of oil. Had I endeavoured to run away my legs must have failed me. I felt Miss Grant trembling from head to toe, in the vibratory, nervous grasp she had of my arm. Why, here was a man who had at least twelve hours before fallen dead in our presence, and whom I had soon afterwards buried in the sea, securing him against the possibility of rising by a sinker weighty enough to keep two such

fellows down ; here was this same man, I say, now standing before me, stalking out of the forest, it would seem, instead of out of the ocean, dressed as I had buried him—a dusky outline with a black face combining with the gloom, and his eyes touched with the faint sparkles of the moonlight that he confronted.

“Oh, speak to him ! What *is* it ?” exclaimed Miss Grant.

Thrice I endeavoured to articulate, but my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth, dry and parched as the sand upon which we stood ; but at the fourth effort I managed to find my voice, and nothing huskier ever rattled in human throat.

“In God’s name,” I said, “who *are* you ?”

He answered, but in a language I did not know.

“It is Spanish,” whispered Miss Grant, “negro Spanish. He is not a ghost then ; but oh, what can he be ? He was dead, Mr. Musgrave, when you buried him.”

“Do you speak Spanish, Miss Grant ?” said I.

She answered, yes.

“For Heaven’s sake then, address him, and resolve this horrible mystery,” I cried.

But she was too terrified to speak to him yet. She continued to cling to me with shivers chasing her. Why, the heart of a Boadicea might have swooned to such an apparition. And then the time of its coming too!—this dimly tintured gloom—the streak of westerling moon—the dark sea floating into the distant silence, with *our* supreme conviction that the corpse of the black object we were looking at lay with a stone attached to it fathoms beneath the surface!

He addressed us again in the same tongue, in the thick, throaty guttural of the African, this time delivering a pretty long sentence, whilst he stood before us with his arms hanging up and down, and a supplicatory inclination of the head towards us, and an occasional totter of his black shanks.

“What does he say?” I cried.

“It is hard to catch his meaning,” she said; “he speaks a very strange kind of Spanish. I think what he wants to say is, that he is alone and ill, and asks us not to hurt him.”

It was about time now that I should see something miraculous had happened in the shape of the preservation of this negro's life. I was still prodigiously amazed and confounded astonished almost to the height of imagining that my mind was all abroad, and out and away more scared than a natural danger could have rendered me. But common sense was beginning to break through, and after a little I had sufficiently mastered myself to think intelligently.

"This is no ghost, Miss Grant," said I ; "the poor devil has in some astonishing fashion come off with his life, and we must learn how. There's a sup of spirits below ; a dram along with something to eat will help his tongue."

I stepped up to him, Miss Grant meanwhile keeping a tight hold of my arm, and with a motion of my hand invited him to accompany us. He at once complied, and the three of us walked to our underground chambers. We had made a very thrifty use of our candles, and had still a few wax ends left. I asked Miss Grant to request him to remain outside till I called him. She did so, and then said,

"Do you mean to ask him to come down here?"

"He won't hurt us," said I; "he is no ghost. Kindness will make him grateful."

"But suppose he believes you meant to drown him?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, we'll clear his mind of that notion," said I, for I was now rallying fast, with a hope rising in me that something helpful to ourselves might come out of this business, and consumedly curious besides, as you may suppose, to learn how the fellow had come to life again.

"I will go first," exclaimed Miss Grant.

Indeed the negro was still little more than a ghost to her mind, and if she led the way, then of course I was between her and him. It was pitch dark, but we were most sorrowfully well acquainted with the road by this time, and easily making our way to the kitchen struck a light, and then called to the black man to come down. He arrived, staring about him with an air of stupid bewilderment, apparently thunderstruck at the sight of our hidden lodging. I lighted a couple of wax

ends to have a good view of him, and found him sure enough the same Quashee whom I had supposed dead, and whom I had buried, and whose very existence, I may say, so full of business had the hours been between, I had almost forgotten. His soldier's coat sat dry upon his shoulders, his loin-cloth was also perfectly dry ; so it was clear his resurrection had not been recent. His grotesque garb and ebony figure formed a detail to fit this subterranean place to perfection. Indeed, somehow it was impossible to glance at him and around the chamber without finding a new kind of significance in everything the eye rested upon stealing into it out of his presence ; the muskets and cutlasses looked as grim again, the walls and ceilings more wildly and piratically rugged than ever they had shown, to the turning of the black, wondering face upon them, as the fellow stared here and there. We had still a drop of the ship's rum left ; I mixed a dram for him in a soup and boulli tin, noticing that he threw the remains of a plantain which he had been eating into the furnace, to receive the draught. Indeed, as he afterwards told us,

he had found a tolerable meal amongs the fruit past the forest, and he was eating plantains when he first hove in sight, as I had gathered from the motion of his arm. However, he could find a corner for a large piece of turtle which I handed to him, devouring it with great relish and avidity.

Miss Grant posted herself on the other side of the table, away from him. She stared incessantly, as if she could not realize his existence, and indeed, though one saw him eating and drinking, sitting solid and substantial, with the whites of his eyes rolling most realistically over the room, whilst he chewed upon the turtle with the true negro smacking of the lips over every bite, yet when I reflected how stone dead he had been, and how completely I had buried him, I would start to the fancy that if it were not all some odd and ugly dream, why then the black creature *might* be a spectre after all, a solemn intimation to my incredulous mind that such things were. But I must say that these notions grew feebler with their recurrence.

“Let us get his story, Miss Grant,” said I

She addressed him nervously ; he stood up

on being spoken to, but sat again on my motioning to him to resume his chair. I shall not in this life forget the peculiar magic that Miss Grant's beauty took on this silent night in our underground haunt, from the emotions which were in her ; the struggling of her brave spirit with the superstitious fears excited by the negro, and *his* black face at hand to contrast her whiteness with. She sat beside but behind me, having regard to the black man's position ; and full as my mind was of the fellow's startling apparition and miraculous recovery—if recovery it were, and not some baleful bit of fetish necromancy—I'd find my thoughts scattering away with confusion when I'd look from the bland ebony countenance on my left, with the whites of the eyes glowing out into orange to the candle light, to the loveliness of the face on my right, charged with the revelation of new beauty to every glance I gave it. I had never heard her speak Spanish before. Nervous and agitated as she was, the rich syllables of the noble tongue rolled in honey from her lips, and as was her face by the negro's, so was the melody of her Castilian utterance inexpressibly sweetened

and heightened by the hoarse, thick speech of the red-coated fiend. It was like the warbling of a flute alternating with the gong-like roll of a tom-tom.

“What does he say?” said I, after he had been spinning a twister lasting over five minutes.

“Why,” she answered, “that he woke as if from a long sleep this evening, some time after sundown, and found himself lying on the beach on his back, on the west side of the island, as I suppose, from his speaking of the situation of the hummock. He does not know how he came there. He recollects arriving here this morning in a boat, and fainting away after drinking the water you gave him. He says, after lying a little he rose and walked towards some trees, where he presently heard a sound of running waters. It was the brook that he means. He drank, and then sought for fruit, but appears to have lost himself in the forest; though a little before he made his appearance he came across the plantains. That is his story.”

“Then,” said I, looking at him, “it is no great mystery after all, though a mighty

wonder all the same. He was not dead, *of course*, when he dropped after the drink. Well now, the big stone that I jammed into his waist-cloth must have rolled out of it when I hove him over the side. It was a sickening business, and the instant I had cleared the boat I sculled up the creek without looking astern. Then what could have followed? The poor fellow floated up on to his back, for he must have drowned with his face down, and was carried away by the tide to that part of the island where he stranded. Had we looked we might have seen him floating, but we were too busy with the boat; and when he had weathered the spit of sand he would be out of sight to us at the head of the creek. Ask him if he knows what this island is?

She addressed him again, speaking now with growing confidence, though her first superstitious fear hung a little lightly upon her. He shook his head whilst he answered. She spoke to him afresh, and then told me that he was not only ignorant of the name of this island, but had not the least idea of the situation of others in these seas; so there was an end

of my expectations of him as a pilot. She questioned him further, and his story was to this effect :—First of all, he and his companion had been runaway slaves. They stole a boat, and blew out to sea from somewhere near Point Maysi, thinking to land at Tortuga, but were sighted and picked up by an English craft, and were entered as seamen aboard her ; but the usage they met with was so barbarous, mainly owing to their inability to understand the orders addressed to them, that they resolved to run from the ship at the first opportunity that offered. A chance was provided by the master of the vessel bringing up under the lee of an island, probably not very remote from our own, to seek shelter, as was to be supposed, from the storm that had swept these waters the other night. There was a boat riding astern to a long line, and when the night came down dark, and the hands were below, saving the anchor watch look-out, the blacks dropped over the side, their dusky skins making their movements very secret in the gloom, and swam stealthily to the boat. But it was already blowing with a bit of a popple on in the bay where the ship

rode, with the flight of the wind scurrying down the mountain side, and they had scarce rolled in-board over the gunwale when the line parted, and they drifted out to sea. So this was the fellow's story, a bit of which I had anticipated hours before at the sight of the shredded strands of the rope. Trusting he might have a few words of English sufficient to understand my questions, so as to save Miss Grant the trouble of inquiring and then interpreting, I sang out to him—

“You speakee English?”

“No, no ; no speakee,” he cried, shaking his head vehemently.

“You no sabbe how to pilot boat?” I roared.

“No speakee, no speakee,” he bawled, wringing his hands ; and then looking at Miss Grant with eyes full of piteous entreaty, oddly accentuated by a broad supplicatory grin that bared his great ivory teeth to the junction of his jaws almost, he poured out a whole torrent of words in Spanish to her, clasping his hands whilst he rattled on, and then dropped plump on both knees before us when he had finished.

“What is it all about?” said I.

“He swears by the Holy Virgin and all the saints that he does not speak English,” said Miss Grant, “and implores you to believe him. The poor fellow has been horribly cowed by ill-treatment. He thinks because you are English you will punish him for not being able to speak our language.”

I motioned to him to rise, and to top the encouragement of my face I mixed him another dram, which he drank on his knees, making some mysterious motion of amity, or perhaps affection, by holding one arm stiff upright after the manner of certain South African tribes; then rose and seated himself.

“It is getting very late,” said I, looking at my watch; “there will be a long day before us in that open boat to-morrow, though pray Heaven it may not prove longer than a day. I would urge you to take some rest.”

“I am not at all sleepy,” she replied. “I am too excited to lie down; what with this apparition and the prospect of our sailing to-morrow, I shall not be able to sleep indeed.”

“That poor fellow will want to turn in,” said I. “Rolled up in a rug, he’ll lie snug enough

near the furnace. You will not object to his occupying this room ? ”

She looked askant at him, and said a little doubtfully, “ No, I should have no fear of him at all but for the really terrifying wonder of his restoration to life.”

Here the negro yawned prodigiously, uttering a bawling sound as he gaped.

“ There is indeed nothing to be afraid of,” said I. “ Harmlessness in natures nearly allied to the animal as his is, is almost always expressed in the face, and I’d stake my right arm upon his being honest to the core—abjectly so indeed. For my part, humanity aside, I consider it my duty to cherish him. A hand to help in the boat will be invaluable. Imagine, for instance, a dead calm, with the gleam of a ship’s canvas just visible on the horizon from the low level of the gunwale. Two of us might manage to row the boat to her ; whereas my single pair of arms would give up exhausted long before I was able to rise the ship’s hull. He is a powerful fellow ; observe the breadth of his chest. Besides, he is a child of the sun, and the fittest help in the world for such an

excursion as we are meditating under these heights, as the Ancient Mariner would call them."

So speaking I took a rug and handed it to the black, motioning him to make a bed of it against the furnace, to which I pointed. He understood me promptly, grinned gratefully, and wrapping the rug around him as he stood, with a proud glance at the embellishment, he lay down with the docility of a trained dog, using his arm for a pillow, and in a couple of minutes was snoring like thunder, sound asleep. Miss Grant withdrew to the inner room, whilst I stole up the steps to take a peep at the boat and see that all was right with her. Her outline showed black against the sand. The ebb of water had almost left her dry, and I had no fear of her. 'Twas a breathless night, with its odd accompaniment of whistling lizards, snoring toads, and chirruping crickets. It wanted but three hours to dawn, and at the first peep of the sun it was my intention to be up and away. The slip of moon glowed rustily over the western rim of the forest, where the heads of the trees spread like funeral plumes

motionless against the sky. I lingered a little, earnestly contemplating the heavens in search of any hints of weather, then went back to the kitchen and lay down, but not to sleep. Indeed if the agitation of my spirits at the prospect of getting away had not kept me restless, I must have been held so by the negro's snoring. He now lay flat upon his back with his mouth wide open, and I can only compare the sounds he produced to the noise made by the keel of a boat dragged over shingle.

Presently Miss Grant called softly to know if I was awake.

"Very much awake indeed," said I.

"All is well whilst he snores like that," she exclaimed.

"Yes," I answered. "But it is happy for us that he should be our guest for one night only. Imagine three weeks of this!"

CHAPTER IV.

WE LEAVE THE ISLAND.

I HAVE heard sweeter music in my time than that negro's snore ; but though it might have disturbed the repose of the dead, nothing was ever more comforting and soothing to me, as you will believe, when I say that I could not listen to the poor fellow's gasps without reflecting how very near indeed I had come to murdering him. My restlessness was a sort of fever, and six or eight times before the daylight came, I crept softly up into the open to take a peep at the boat, and make sure that she lay safe. Indeed, we had met with so many surprises on this island, that I was in a manner prepared for the strangest thing that could happen ; and I believe had I looked forth out of the hatch and found the boat gone, whatever

might be the emotions which would have helped to the madness such a loss must have raised in me, wonder would not have been of them.

I had made up my mind to steer west, knowing that the American seaboard lay that way, to say no more ; but it was very vexing that the negro should be ignorant of the situation of this island, and unable to pilot me to the nearest inhabited land. The joy caused by possession of the boat had overwhelmed all other considerations ; but now that I lay sleepless upon my bed of grass and rug, waiting for the skylight to glimmer out to the dawn, I found myself a bit disheartened by the prospect of the new voyage. That there was land down in the west within view from the ship's masthead, I did not doubt ; but then it might prove such another little spot as this, verdant and uninhabited ; in which case we should have to push on ; and how far off might the nearest land to it be ? It was a great ocean, as Miss Grant had said, for so little a boat. Strange, too, that one of my minor, seafaring nightmares should be fulfilled long after I had abandoned the profession, for I recollect that when I was at sea I would think

with horror of exposure in an open boat, which to my young imagination threatened an experience scarce less fearful than the raft. Indeed, of the two, perhaps, the raft was the less horrible, for a man was not likely to linger long on such a contrivance, whereas in an open boat he might go on languishing for days until he died, and then be found a skeleton in the bottom of her, with the little craft afloat and buoyant after months of different kinds of weather. Nay, had not that morning indeed illustrated the significance of the open boat at sea : the dead man in her, that creature yonder pointing with ebony forefinger to his mouth filled with froth, the empty locker, the thirsty, oily smell of the paint, inside and out, exhaling to the roasting glare of the sun ! Well, well, thought I, the sort of spirit I require is not to be got out of thoughts of this kind ; and my eye then catching the dim, greenish lustre of the dawn, lying like waning moonshine upon the skylight, I started up, thanking God for daylight, and feeling that, let the future hold what it might, the bars of our prison here were broken, and we could now free ourselves from an unendurable con-

finement, which but yesterday morning was as hopeless to the heart as the bald sweep of the sea was to the eye.

“Is that you moving, Mr. Musgrave?” exclaimed Miss Grant, from behind her curtain.

“Yes,” said I; “the dawn has broken. You have not slept, I fear?”

“No,” she answered, “I have not closed my eyes.”

“Pray endeavour to get a little sleep,” I exclaimed. “Mumbo-Jumbo here can help me in the few preparations that remain, and I don’t doubt of making myself understood. Even an hour’s sleep will be helpful. Don’t doubt that I shall call you when we are ready to get under way,” I added, laughing.

She answered me by whipping back the shawl along the rod, and stepping forth.

How can you talk of sleeping *now*?” she exclaimed; “the instant you are ready, Mr. Musgrave, let us start.”

I was glad to hear her say this. There was no fear of her hesitating to sail in the little boat into the vast sea that stretched around; but I had suspected she would express in her

manner that her mind hung in the wind a trifle, and that she would show herself a little scared by a prospect that was far more formidable than it appeared, as *she* would know, as well as I.

The negro was snoring as briskly as ever. Heaven knows, this miserable old kitchen was only too familiar to us ; yet it seemed to be made fresh, as though in faith we had stumbled upon another underground room, by the novelty to our eyes of that black man, resembling some immense performing monkey in his red coat, lying flat on his back, his mouth wide open, his arms extended, and the palms of his hands showing like dirty yellow paper inlaid in his skin to the jetty points of his thumbs and fingers. I stirred him with my foot, but I probed him in this way for some time before he opened his eyes. He then sat up with a glare of astonishment, whilst he grasped his wool, and whipped out in a thick, half-awake voice with a string of Spanish, sounding like the gurgling of water in a sucked hubble-bubble. However, he speedily grew conscious enough to understand Miss Grant when she informed him that it was time to get up, and that we wanted him to help us complete

our arrangements for promptly leaving the island. He rose slowly on to his cucumber shanks, scratching his head with a dull stare of mystification, as I thought, in his dusky eyes as he rolled them from me to my companion, and then addressed her. She answered ; he spoke again with growing energy ; she nodded, on which, to my astonishment, he clasped his hands and dropped upon his knees, and fell to pouring out a whole jumble of words, the imploring character of which was gatherable from the tone of his voice.

“ Why, what *is* the matter with the poor wretch ? ” said I ; “ have his wits left him during the night ? ”

“ He is entreating me to beg you not to take him away from the island,” said Miss Grant, viewing him with surprise and pity.

“ But does he know,” I cried, “ that if we leave him here he will be all alone ; not another black even to keep him company ? ”

She spoke to him again, motioning to him at the same time to rise from his knees. Her question produced a very long answer. His looks and inflections of speech pronounced him

desperately in earnest. I could not follow a syllable ; time was pressing, moreover, for I desired, when afloat, all the daylight I could get, and I was growing a little impatient, when Miss Grant turning to me said, " He desires to stop here. Indeed, I believe, could you even carry him to the boat by main force, he would jump overboard and swim back to the island on your letting go of him. He says it would be like being a king in his own country to live in these fine rooms, and have the island all to himself."

" Humanity forbids it," said I, amazed.

" But what is to be done ?" she exclaimed ; and I instantly echoed the question mentally, when I glanced at his robust figure, with some stupid thought of compulsion in my mind, and then reflected that he might detain us here for hours whilst we endeavoured to persuade him, without perhaps altering his resolution, after a most wearisome course of exhortations and representations, all of which would have to be translated if he was to understand them. I noticed him ogling the old muskets and cutlasses upon the wall, with a negro's affection for such

toys kindling in his eye. No good could come of bothering ourselves over the matter, so I formed my resolution.

“If he won’t come, why then of course he must stop.”

“He will not come,” she exclaimed; “he is a runaway slave, remember, fresh too from being cruelly treated even when dealt with as a free-man. He means to stop here, indeed.”

“Then please tell him, Miss Grant, he may do as he pleases; but I should have been glad to have the use of those brawny arms. He can’t starve, I believe and maybe when he wishes to leave he’ll know how to go to work. We have no powder, but he is welcome to those muskets yonder,” nodding towards them—I caught him watching me eagerly as I did so—“and he may as well take possession of all the traps we must leave behind; so there’ll be clothes enough for him,” said I, with a look at his shanks, “not to mention some pretty dresses when he has worn my coats out.”

On this being interpreted to the poor fellow, he burst into a hundred passionate exclamations of joy, was so convulsed with delight, indeed,

that I expected to see him plump down upon his nose and roll upon the floor in his ecstasy. He clapped his hands, made as if to embrace me, recoiled a step with a frantic skip, leapt with such agility that he struck his head against the ceiling with force enough to have stretched him motionless had his cranium been a white man's.

"Pretty good all this," I exclaimed, laughing in spite of myself, "for a man who was last night a ghost, and yesterday morning a corpse."

I had nearly completed all necessary preparations on the preceding day. The halliards formed of a length of coir rope, the strands unlaied, halved, and laid up again into a smaller line, were rove ; the sail of coloured shawls was bent to the yard. There remained but little more to do than fill a few outstanding bottles with water, stow away the craw-fish, and the like. The boat was a roomy little craft ; yet though there were but two of us, we found there would be space for no more than a small bundle of necessary articles chosen from the luggage we must perforce leave behind us. I asked Miss Grant to make a collection of such things as she might deem needful, taking care that at

the utmost the parcel should be but a small one ; and then putting the negro to the job of filling the remaining bottles with water from the brook, I slipped round past the creek for my morning plunge, from which I returned as much refreshed as though I had slept soundly all night. My next act was to climb the hummock, and take a last view of the sea from a spot whence I had surveyed it again and again, with many contending emotions of misery, hope, and despair. There was nothing in sight, a light air was fanning out of the north and west, with weight enough in it to put a blinding twinkling into the water where it was sun-touched ; the heavens spread in a soft light blue, without the phantasm of a cloud anywhere visible. Sheltered by my wide, sombrero-like hat from the bite of the sun that, low as he yet hung over the sea, stung the naked flesh like nettles, I lingered a little, after bringing my eyes away from the silken brimming of the blue ocean to the azure distance where it blended with the heavens, to rest them for a few minutes upon the island.

The harsh *squawk* of the macaw, or some

such fowl, came like the edge of a saw out of the heavy greenery of the forest ; to every pause in the fitful blowing of the morning breeze a hundred sounds of bird and reptile life on the island—whistlings, croakings, rook-like cawings, the jabber of green and golden shapes, with short notes as of bells accompanying, chimes-fashion, the clear, melodious pipings of the very few birds who really could sing on that island—came stealing in a growing volume upon the ear, then softening again to some hot, soft gush of the wind that floated the strains of the concert backwards to the trees. The tall guinea-grass stirred to the creeping of invisible things ; the draught of air breezing upon the weather-side of the forest set the branches dancing, and the verdure seemed to flash again to the lift of the foliage, as the silver under-lining of innumerable leaves shone out with the stirring of the air. Maybe I did not loiter above a couple of minutes, but thought has lightening rapidity, and I lived again throughout the three weeks we had spent on this beautiful island in the few seconds during which I stood contemplating the sunny scene. The setting of us ashore by the cold-

blooded rascals of the Iron Crown, the crushing weight of hopelessness upon us as we sat together yonder, where the white sand wound in ivory to the creek; with our luggage heaped about us, no shelter for our heads, no prospect of deliverance; then the hollow and startling notes of the midnight bell, my strange discovery of the sand-covered hatch, our life in the darksome chambers underground there, the fright occasioned by the monkey, and now that boat snug in the creek yonder!—memory affected me like a succession of wild dreams. The mighty surface of the sea stared blindly at the sky, and for the life of me I could not repress a shudder as I glanced at the boat, and thought of the tiny speck it would presently be making upon that huge, broiling, merciless expanse.

I broke from my thoughts, and quitted the hummock with an odd and most bothersome fancy in me—so perversely does the imagination steer the mind—of what my cousin Alexander would say and think, supposing we should live to tell him the story, of the intimate association forced upon Miss Grant and myself by the perils of the ocean, of our living as though we

were a couple of Indians underground, of our being thrown together for another spell of yet deeper intimacy in an open boat—pshaw! thought I, 'tis high time we got away.

But first it was our business to make as good a meal as we had appetite for. The negro ate like a cormorant, and since his resolution was formed, I hoped for his sake that there would happen no dearth of turtle whilst he chose to remain all alone by himself here. It made one think of Juan Fernandez and the solitary Mosquito Indian, to look at him. I asked Miss Grant to again endeavour to persuade him to accompany us, thinking that the fellow might now have changed his mind. But the moment he gathered her meaning his face filled with alarm; he stared at me so appealingly that it was impossible to watch him unmoved, and I think he would have gone down on his knees again but for something which Miss Grant said that reassured him.

“It cannot be helped,” said I; “he is not a little boy; I cannot carry him to the boat. He may be even more lucky than we—I mean that a vessel may heave-to off here even before he

is tired of the place. Have you collected what you want, Miss Grant ? ”

“ Yes,” she exclaimed, rising, and going to the inner room she brought out a little bundle. “ I have shown great self-denial, don’t you think ? ” she exclaimed, laughing, as she held it up.

I did not ask what it contained, though I afterwards came to learn that it consisted mainly of a few parcels of letters and bits of jewellery, and the like, prized entirely for the givers’ sake. “ It seems hard,” she added, with a wistful look at her trunks that showed through the opening, “ to leave all my pretty purchases behind. How patient you were, Mr. Musgrave, when you accompanied me on my shopping trips ! What a number of things I could have done without if this experience had been foreseen ! ”

“ Better,” said I, “ that this honest negro should possess them than that they should have foundered with the Iron Crown ; for the bottom of the sea was bound to be their destination had they remained aboard. Now, if you take my advice, you will put on your broadest-brimmed hat, and our stock of um-

brellas must go with us, lest a breeze of wind should carry one or more overboard."

I beckoned to the negro, and Miss Grant made him understand that he was to carry certain articles to the boat, and then entering her room I took down her hammock, which was a thing that stowed very compactly, and might be of use to her were we driven ashore upon such another island as this. I also gave the negro a good warm cloak to carry, a well-lined garment, that would serve as an excellent wrap for Miss Grant at night; but though we took these things, there was little more we conveyed to the boat—my monkey jacket, I remember, her and my pistols with powder and ball, a few remaining bundles of cigars, all the umbrellas we possessed, some rugs, and a few other items which I need not tax my memory to recall.

All being ready we slowly left the underground rooms which had sheltered us for three weeks, both of us sending lingering glances around as we quitted the dreary, dream-like haunt, and accompanied by the negro walked to the boat.

She was lying, half the length of her dry, upon the sand. The negro placed the parcels he carried in the bottom of her, then came to me, and letting go the line which held her, we put our shoulders to the bows, and drove the craft afloat. I jumped in as she slid into the brilliantly clear, calm surface, and throwing one of the paddles over, got her head round, then sheered her alongside the bank of the creek, extending my arm to Miss Grant, who sprang aboard. My next business was to coil the line away in the bow, then to thoroughly overhaul our little ship to see that her freight—more precious to us, mere craw-fish, turtle, bottles of fresh water as it was, than the richest treasure that ever put to sea in the hold of a register ship—was properly trimmed, and that nothing the island could supply us with was wanting. Miss Grant sat in the stern-sheets, sheltered by an umbrella. The radiance of the early sunshine came streaming down from the far eastern sea-line hot as molten silver into the creek, and the glare of it, rising off the surface to the face, which it stung as though the lustre was formed of flaming needles, furnished a mighty

uncomfortable hint of the sort of roasting that awaited us outside, when the luminary should rise to the middle of the sky. I threw the paddles over, and rowed slowly down the creek. There was no draught of air to be felt here, though the water outside was wrinkling to the fiery breathing that came softly out of the north-west. The negro walked along the bank to the edge of the spit, where, drawing his figure erect, he held his right arm high, and so stood watching us motionless, like a black statue whose nobly-proportioned trunk and arms some fool had smeared with red paint. I noticed my companion gaze wistfully landwards as we drew out. You saw in the expression of her eyes how busy her memory was, with a change in their soft, brilliant depths into a look of mingled wonder and uncertainty rather than of dismay, as they went seawards from the bright vegetation, the arid hummocks, and the tracks of white sand, whitening out from the dense undergrowth to the long space of dazzling coral platform on which the blue breaker was melting.

There was scarce an experience of mine on

yonder island that did not recur to me as a passage in a dream might, so vague did the memory of it offer to my imagination through the sheer strangeness of the whole adventure. But nothing approached the dreaminess which the reality of this our departure took. It was not only the feeling that we were leaving the place for good—a prison from which we had again and again feared we should never have power to deliver ourselves ;—no ! the realization of escape, when the hope of escape has long lain dead, will always affect the mind at the first start as something visionary, something that one durst not believe. But it was not *that* only. It was the manner also of our going. It might have seemed to a strange eye, ignorant of the truth, as though this young girl and I were some young bride and bridegroom, with a little summer ocean home hidden away among the cool trees up there, and that we were starting upon a pleasure cruise, intending maybe a survey of our tiny principality, to which we should be returning anon. This was my fancy as we glided down the creek, and it was this that made the thing as unreal as a dream to me.

It was fitter for a summer Thames scene than an illustration of human distress at sea. Who would have imagined, watching me in shirt and trousers and shoes, bare-armed, slowly plying the flashing paddles—who would have conceived, observing the quiet figure of the girl seated aft draped in white, carefully sheltering her face, the shadow of her wide hat enriching her warm beauty with the softness of the tint it made, though there was sparkle enough in the water alongside to touch her hair with a delicate light of gold—that we were quitting the island in search of succour, that we had launched ourselves on a boat voyage which might prove darker with peril to us than the blackest hour we had yet passed since we boarded the *Iron Crown* in the Downs, that instead of a sultry morning jaunt alongshore we were going to lose ourselves in the heart of the mighty ocean yonder, with no further hope in the result than we could get from confidence in the Divine guidance?

Once clear of the creek I hoisted our sail of shawls, flattening in the sheet and putting the helm down to test the little craft's capacity of

looking up to it. The colours of the shawls were red, white, and blue, and at a distance the boat sliding out of the creek might have passed for a huge aquatic parrot, outward bound on some predatory excursion. The negro, with his figure standing boldly out at the extremity of the tongue of sand, now held up both arms, slowly moving his hands at the wrists. It looked as if he were blessing us, but I suppose it was his country's way of saying goodbye. Miss Grant waved her hand to him, and I bade him farewell with a flourish of my hat, whereupon he turned on a sudden and ran with incredible swiftness to the underground rooms, down whose hatchway he shot with the rapidity of a skip-jack plunging from its leap out of water, and so vanished.

"He has gone to clothe himself," said Miss Grant.

"Wonderful how he could have held out so long," said I; "the desire to squeeze himself into my patent leather boots and frock-coat, not to mention my green satin stock and several coloured shirts which he will come across, must have risen into madness whilst he stood holding

up his arms. One guesses that by the rush he made when nature gave in. And now, Miss Grant, how is this little craft going to serve us ? ”

There was, as I have said, a draught of air fiery hot as the waftings of the atmosphere of a furnace blowing out of the north-west, with just weight enough to keep the water twinkling, and to thread it here and there with long, silken, dark blue shadows with the heavier scoring of its sparkling pressure. I hauled the sheet of the sail as flat as it would come, but could not get the boat's head round to within six points of this air ; and even at that, when she had got way enough upon her to set the water slobbering and tinkling a bit along her clinker-built sides, I noticed a leewardly trend that sent her fathom or two of wake, oil-smooth with a few holes of eddies in it, veering away upon the weather quarter. I had no compass, and when we lost sight of land there would be nothing but the sun or stars to steer by ; meanwhile however I made up my mind to head away north, keeping the boat as close as she would lie, and then supposing the breeze to hold, when we had put

the island a mile or two astern, to go about on the starboard tack, and blow away as best we could, south and west, partly with the hope of rising the land in the west before sundown, and partly with the expectation of thrusting into the fairway south ; for it was nearly always in the south quarter that the sails we had sighted from the hummock hove into view, with one or two in those three weeks gliding blue and ghostly in the far east, but none that ever we saw north or west.

“ Our sail should make a brilliant signal,” exclaimed Miss Grant, “ if a ship should come within view of it.”

“ Yes,” said I, “ that was the thought in me when I hoisted it. Red, white, and blue, the proper sort of colour for English hearts to beat under. Quashee’s soul will have yearned for them. The red shawl would have made him a fine turban ; indeed it would be finer as a turban than as a sail,” I added with a glance at the yawns where the shawls had been taped together.

Yet the fabric was giving the boat some sort of way, and the island was slowly dwindling. It

looked a radiant, gem-like spot now upon the ocean, that brimmed with a line of silver to the white sand. I sat watching it, the boat steering herself, for which I was mightily thankful, for the little tiller I had shipped grew into a heated bar of iron to the touch, and my bare knuckles felt as if they were flayed after keeping my hand spread to the sun a few minutes. I could not but hope that I was acting rationally in quitting the island in this little boat, for the solid land there at least supplied a certainty of refuge, which induced a wild emotion of misgiving when I glanced away at the huge sea, and thought of the gale that had swept it the other night. Yet we had both of us pined and prayed for such an opportunity of escape as had now come, and there seemed something like the profanity of ingratitude in hesitation, natural and reasonable as misgiving was at such a time.

I was startled from the reverie into which I had plunged by a sudden exclamation from Miss Grant, who sat near me bending over the side. She pointed down into the water, shrinking a little as she did so, with an expression of consternation glittering in her glance and dilating

her eyes as she looked round at me. I peered over and saw immediately below, scarce six feet deep in the clear, blue, glass-like profound, the long dark form of a great shovel-nosed shark, with the upper barb of its tail rounding out like a scythe, the whole outline absolutely motionless, without a tremour in its fins that I could witness, though we were sliding along at some two or three miles in the hour, and the thing held its position as though it were our shadow. For the life of me I could not help a sudden recoil. It was as big and ugly a monster of the kind as ever I had seen, and by simulating, as it were, the reflection of our boat, furnished an appalling mockery in that way to the imagination—to *mine*, at least, which instantly went to work to construe the grim and foul adumbration into a foreshadowing of our fate.

But I pulled myself together quickly, and said, "One cannot sail these waters without sights of this kind happening. Stop! he may be routed out of this."

I took an oar and plunged it harpoon-wise at the brute, and struck him fair on the back. Ugh! the touch, the feel of it threw me into a cold

sweat. It would have been otherwise with me had I barbed the beast, but the soft slippery contact was like the blow of a baby's fist upon the snout of a tigress. Yet it startled the creature nevertheless. With a sweep of its tail it drove ahead, sending a shoal of bubbles to the surface, with a line of sparkles in the blue beneath, and when we came to look for it again it was not to be seen on either side the boat. I met Miss Grant's eye thoughtfully fixed upon mine. The whole weight of my responsibility came upon me *then*, somehow. I knew that her trust was in me—that wherever I led she would follow in full faith in my judgment. Her life had grown so precious to me, that the mere fancy of imperilling it by any resolution I might form, hoping always for the best, was unendurable. I sent a glance into the hot azure distance, then at the island, then met her eyes afresh.

"If you are in the least degree timid—it is not too late. We can be ashore again in an hour," I exclaimed.

"I am not timid," she replied ; "the sight of that great fish frightened me. Why should we

return ? Here is our chance for escaping ; why should we neglect it ? ”

“ True ; but often bitter perils and privations attend attempts of this kind,” I rejoined. “ Your life is dear to me, Miss Grant ; ” her lips stirred, but I did not catch what she said. “ Is it right,” I continued, “ that I should subject you to the risks and exposure of such a venture as this ? I may have acted in too great a hurry, scarcely shown prudence in my hot desire to break from that jail there. This proposal now occurs to me. Let us return to the island. The negro will help me in my new plan. Here is a boat in which he or I may every day row or sail away into the southward, which is apparently the navigated tract of these waters, and it will be strange indeed if we do not meet with some vessel before long to which we can make our condition known.”

“ You would take me with you on such excursions ? ”

“ No need. I should leave you on the island until we could obtain help.”

She shook her head. “ No,” she exclaimed slowly, with great emphasis ; and then she

added, "Imagine the evening to come on one day and no sign of your boat. The night passes, and next day, and then weeks pass, and I am still alone. Oh, Mr. Musgrave, how can you *suggest* such a thing? When we were set ashore you said it made you happy to think that we were together. That was my happiness too," she continued, dropping her eyes for an instant, and then lifting them again to mine, "and now you will risk a separation—that—that—" She shook her head again almost bitterly, but smiled a moment after. "Besides," she went on, as though she had no patience to hear me, nor indeed meant to give me a chance to speak, "you would not get the negro to accompany you. No threats, no entreaties would prevail upon him, I am sure. He would dread to be recaptured. He has that island all to himself now, and a hole to live in, and is as free as a monkey in any forest in Brazil, and should you attempt to persuade or force him, what might happen? Another mutiny, Mr. Musgrave, more dreadful than the one on board the Iron Crown, with a chance of his taking your life, and of my being left alone with him!"

“Be it so,” I said; “we are together, and together we will remain—at least for the present,” I added, cooling down my voice suddenly to check the gathering ardency of it.

She made no answer.

CHAPTER V.

A DAY OF PERIL.

By four o'clock in the afternoon I reckoned the island to be about two leagues distant, scarce visible, so low it lay, save when the slide of the boat to the brow of the swell showed it "dipping," as they say at sea—just a blot of indigo blue upon the gleam running to it, and against the whitish azure behind. At about this hour the small, scorching breeze, that had held fairly steady from the north-west since the early morning, died away as though devoured out of the atmosphere by the blazing eye overhead, and the deep turned into liquid glass, with the heave of it due east. It was not an undulation to notice from a ship's side, or from the low elevation of the island ; but to us in that boat it seemed as heavy as a strong

sea, with the rise of it putting the horizon out of sight one moment, and the next making the bright line look to spread twice as far as it went in reality. One may talk of getting a sense of the mightiness of the deep when aboard a great ship that is hove by the surge with her thousand tons of freight, and the massive fabric of her spars and rigging roaring into the gloom of the tempest as a boy tosses a ball ; but it is surely in the little open boat that one feels the power of the giantess most. You lie close to her heart, you feel the beating of it, your eyes are within arm's-length of the mysteries under her shining breast, the spirit within you takes measure of the volume and altitude of her respirations, and you are oppressed by an indeterminable emotion of awe, of a kind different from any the mind is sensible of in viewing the sea from an elevation, whether it be the edge of a range of coast or the rail of a tall vessel.

I had put the boat's head round for the southward a little time before the stark calm fell, but without her measuring a quarter of a mile of water in the time, I should say, so faint grew

the breeze whilst slowly slackening into breathlessness. I said to Miss Grant that I could not imagine it hotter in the most scorching circle of Dante's Inferno. Why, I had but to stand up and let my arms hang up and down, and the sweat drained from my fingers' end, as though I had just been fished out of the sea. It was not the blaze coming down that one felt so much as the dazzle that rose off the edge of the water, lifting into the face as though from polished copper, and making one writhe and twist about in search of the shelter that neither umbrella nor hat could provide. At one or thereabouts we had made a little meal of plantains and craw-fish, along with a small draught from one of the bottles; and then—though there was wind enough blowing to keep the feeling of fever out of the blood—even then I remember contemplating our stock of provisions with a melancholy eye as I ruminated upon the perishable qualities of them. But when this "furious calm," as the Spaniards call it, came, the fear I had for our food deepened. Though everything was cooked barring the fruit, it seemed cock-sure to me that our

miserable store of boiled turtle and the like must putrefy right away off, and leave us nothing but our oranges and bananas to eat. We were without bread, biscuit, flour. People putting away from a ship in our condition will, for the most part, unless they are very unfortunate indeed, carry with them food that defies climate—meat in tins, bags of bread, with other matters designed for seafaring use. But two-thirds of our stock might not keep sweet through the night, and the very plantains methought must rot speedily to such a blasting and withering eye as the sun looked down upon us with. But though now and again I would send a wistful glance at the blue smudge in the distance whenever it showed, I said nothing. The die was cast, we had to abide by the throw. It would have been wanton in me to suggest a return to the island after what Miss Grant had said; and as to the provisions, I comforted myself with reflecting that the cocoanuts, at all events, would hold their virtue, whilst I also considered that I had done my best—that what the island yielded we had taken—and that no man, though he thought

with the spirit of a prophet in him, could do more.

Miss Grant made no complaint. It was seldom that I met her eye but that she had a smile. It seemed to me that now she was confronted with something tangible, a condition she could realize, a situation of which the issue, whether life or death, was within the grasp of her mind, her spirit rose to it. It would make me shrink at times to cast a look around the sea, for when the island disappeared the vast solitude in which we floated became sheer ocean to every sense, full of the desolation which the distressed heart would give to it, and which there was nothing in the glory of the day to mitigate. But her eyes sought the distance fearlessly ; twenty moods alternated in her, as I saw in her varying expression ; but no hint of timidity was ever visible in one of them. Indeed it was the heroic tranquillity of her look that kept me still. The heat tried me fearfully, the dead calm was like a sensible weight upon my spirits ; I had worked hard on the previous day, and had not closed my eyes for twenty-four hours ; and such was my temper, as I sat

in that small scorched boat dodging the swing of our preposterous sail for the idle comfort of the shadow of it, that I needed but a face opposite me to reflect mine to have exhausted myself with grumblings and lamentations, and maybe to have resolved, the instant the cool of the evening came, to hark back again for the island as nimbly as our paddles would sweep us there.

However, I got the better of all this unmanly weakness after the sun went down; though whilst he was going I could have stood up and shaken my fist, as Tom Cringle did, at the vast red, rayless body that looked, as his lower limb hovered a moment or two on the sea-line, to be sipping the blood streaming from his own fiery substance into the water beneath him. There was no air, not the fluttering of a breath, to touch with the shadowing of a feather the immeasurable liquid surface breathing in oil with the sluggish panting of some sentient thing half dead with the day-long pouring of the luminary upon it. Whilst the last beam of daylight sent its red flash across the sea, with a running of the crimson stream of wake to the orb as though 'twere a length of cloth of purple

gold that he dragged off the sea with him as he slipped down the side, I stood up on the thwart with my arm around the mast, and carefully scrutinized the horizon. There was nothing to see, no longer even the island's dim shadow, which was already absorbed by the airy gloom creeping with tropic stealthiness and celerity also into the atmosphere now that the hour of sundown was passed. I lowered the sail to save the chafe of it, and carrying a bunch of plantains into the stern-sheets, made with Miss Grant a little supper of them, helped with a bit of cold turtle.

"Do you remember," she said, "when we walked together at Deal on that moonlight night, the day before we sailed, that I said the beauty of the sea frightened me with its immensity, that the magnitude of its sublimity was an oppression which forbade delight? I remember some fancy of the kind occurring to me," she said, musingly, her face stealing out pale in the shadow, with a corresponding deepening of the luminous dusk of her eyes. "But how should such beauty as this," glancing round, and then up at the sky that in the east was already

velvet-like, with the young moon in the midst of it, whilst the stars seemed literally to shower out upon the gaze if you did but watch any space in the heavens for a little, "affect people situated as we? How *tremendous* it all is, Mr. Musgrave! There was never this sort of repose on the island. Listen!"

I strained my ear, whilst she looked at me with a faint smile.

"Not a sound," she exclaimed, after a few moments; "not a breath, not a whisper of air. Ashore there was always the simmering of the surf, some stirring of breeze or pinions amidst the foliage, and the song of the crickets, and the rest of the midnight concert. But here; oh, listen!"

She paused again, with her hand lifted.

"Holy Mother of God!" she cried, with a passionate toss of her arms. "Only think of being *alóne* in this boat!"

"I don't think my loneliness would last anyhow," said I; "I guess, as Jonathan says, I would give myself about two such nights as this to have a whole ship's company of spectres along with me. There are plenty of green navies under our keel for marine phantoms to rise up

out of. Yes," said I, pulling a cheroot from my pocket for the blessed solace of the mere smell of the weed, "it would not take me two such nights as this to introduce a very attractive society betwixt these gunwales. With my mind's eye I already see it clearly : here, where you are sitting, some mariner that fell overboard when Columbus was sailing this way, his eyes full of Spanish fire, moustachios curled upon his cheeks, and the body sheathed in old metal, for they wore armour in those times, though I won't swear that the forecastle Jacks went so clad ; yonder in the bows a grim old buccaneer, some tough, sun-blackened rogue of the days of James I., wearing a spiked beard, and grizzled locks flowing upon his back, a great fusee across his knee, and a murderous hanger against his hip ; it is not hard to see him sitting yonder in the bows, his arms folded, his head drooped, and a falcon-look fixed upon me under the sleepy lid— Why, Miss Grant, these imaginations won't do, you know," I added, chipping at a little flint for a light ; "but this silence is wonderful though, and Lord, how the dew falls !"

It was the dark roll of the swell perhaps that rendered the hush more oppressive to one's thinking of it ; for the silence with which the folds swung along put an inexpressible quality of ghostliness into the reality of the dusky run of the water. Expectation seemed to crave for sound with the sight of such voluminous movement, and it made me feel deaf sometimes to look at it and hear nothing.

You would suppose that a couple placed as we were would find nothing to talk about but our situation, of ships heaving in sight, of the time our stock of provisions and water would last, and so forth. Instead, we conversed on any other subject. Not that we desired to shun such topics ; we would recur to them at intervals ; but in the main our chat was on matters in which it seemed almost like a sort of impiety to take interest at such a time as this. I very well recollect that, one thing leading to another, she gave me a description of society at Rio, of the balls, the dresses, the dances ; how the English held aloof ; the brutal treatment of negroes by blacks who, having been themselves slaves, had ended by becoming the possessors of slaves.

There were long spells at a time when we forgot where we were in listening to one another. I had been struck by her exclamation when she spoke of how she should feel were she alone in this boat, and asked her if she was a Roman Catholic.

"No," she exclaimed; "how strange, now, that we should have been together for so long a while, and that you should not know what my faith is!"

"Not so strange if you will but think of it," said I. "There are no churches at sea, and old Broadwater's discipline was not of a sort to furnish one with a chance of discovering a fellow-passenger's religion."

"My mother died a Catholic. She wished me to be of her faith, and of the faith of her forefathers. My father belonged to the Kirk, Mr. Musgrave, and my mother was a very sweet, yielding, docile woman, and I am glad it is with me as it is, though I feel that to be good is to be all. To be able to say that if God can read your heart you need not be afraid, is to be happy within yourself—"

Hark! what was that? We both started. A

strange sound came sweeping along the polished brows of the undulating water, as though some steamer at the distance of a mile or two were letting off steam at regularly respiratory intervals. It was a long, seething, blowing noise, followed by the sharp showering sound of water foaming into water from the height of a cataract. It was right astern of us. I turned and peered into the dimness there, but could see nothing.

“What is it, do you think, Mr. Musgrave?”

The girl's question was answered by the sudden upheaval of a long black line floating up like the keel of an inverted ship, with a brilliant sparkling of phosphorescent light all along the ebon side of it, off which rose a faint gleam to the reflection of the horn of moon and to the shine of the planets and bright stars in the wet blackness, instantly followed by the same steamlike hissing we had before heard, only that it was now so close the blast of it came tingling to the ear through the dead hush; and with this sound there rose into the dusk a great feather-shaped, cloudy spout of water, green as emerald, and radiant as though it were vapour illuminated by the glare of a

signal-light with the sea-fire that swarmed in it.

“A big whale, by Jove!” said I, “and unpleasantly near to us too.”

Indeed the black mass had risen within pistol-shot; but the very element of fear its proximity induced deepened the impressiveness of the dark grandeur, the majestic, mysterious beauty of the show. Oh, never to be forgotten was the sight of that leviathan shadow oozing out of the indigo gleamless stagnation, looking half a mile long with the loom of it upon the clear obscure, the sea rippling in fire against its sides, and its liquid spout shooting up into a column like a dull green flame, arching over at its summit as though curled by a breeze of wind, and falling in a burning shower into the water that flashed to the discharge, till the curved substance of the big fish loomed as big and black again as it was against this mystic radiance of its own making. Presently the huge shape melted out, but some time afterwards it spouted afresh down in the south-west, the bulk of it rising fair in the slender feathering of silver under the moon, whilst a second

monster blew about a mile away down in the north, the sounds following one another through the silence for all the world like some mighty giant rumbling into a few snores in his sleep; and then we saw no more of the creatures, though the notion that there might be others about kept us both exceedingly uneasy with the fancy of a sudden shattering hoist-up starwards with the rising of one of these monsters under our keel, its blow-hole right amidships of us.

Not a breath of air yet. You saw the exquisite polish on the water in the untarnished flake of some large star's reflection as it rode the black brow of the swell, widening as it went. During such dead hours as these I knew there would be no earthly chance for us; for, as I have long ago said, steam was not as it is now. There was but sail to think of, and nothing could be stirring on such a night. The atmosphere was heavy with dew that made it cool. The thwarts and the line of the boat's gunwale sparkled with the moisture as though crystallized. I shipped my pea-coat to keep my shirt dry, and wrapped a shawl round Miss Grant. As bad a part as any of it all was the want of

space; the cramped feeling that came into the body with the very look of our narrow quarters, let alone the reality of them. She was a fat boat happily, of a lubberly, motherly roundness, like the half of an apple, staunch and comparatively new, an honest ship's quarter-boat, in a word, worth dollars enough I dare say to have brought some evil mutterings into the throat of the skipper of the ship she had belonged to, when he peered over the stern and found her gone. Her beam and the heaviness of her build, that gave her a firm seat on the water, enabled us to move without fear of capsizing her, and from time to time I would give Miss Grant my hand, and get her to step from thwart to thwart for the ease and comfort of the motion after the long spells of cramped sitting.

At last it came to an hour when I told her she must lie down and sleep.

"I shall be able to doze as I sit here, I am sure," she answered.

"Be guided by me, my dear Miss Grant. Every bone in you will ache like the gout if you slumber seated on this hard board with your back against the side. See, now, the sort of

bed I have had in my mind for you all along."

I placed a strapped rug in the bottom of the boat, close against the stern-sheets, to serve as a pillow, then spread other rugs along with shawls, as a mattress, reserving yet a rug, for we were well supplied in this way, to cover her with.

"Now," said I, "if you will remove your hat, and pull the hood of your cloak over your head and lie down, you will rest as comfortably as ever you did in your underground room."

"Why will you not take some rest first, Mr. Musgrave? I can keep watch, if indeed any sort of watchfulness is necessary on such a death-like night as this. Sleep whilst you can. There may come a change of weather which will prevent you from obtaining repose. You can trust me to awaken you if the need for doing so should happen."

But I said no; she had not closed her eyes last night. I would call her by and by, and then she could relieve me, as the sea-saying is. She would have remonstrated, but I took her hand, pressed it to my lips, with a gentle court-

ing of her, by retaining her hand, to leave her seat, so without saying more she removed her hat, turned that I might adjust the hood to her head, and lay down. I covered her carefully, snugging her little feet which extended under the thwart, and then fitted a small umbrella over her head to shelter it from the dew. I asked her if she was comfortable, peering as I spoke under the umbrella at the delicate glimmer of the beauty of her brow and cheek in the shadow there. She answered gently, yes ; and disengaging her hand from the shawl, extended it to me.

“How good you are, how kind you are!” she exclaimed. “Oh, Mr. Musgrave, how would it have been with me but for you ? and how do I repay you ?—by bringing you into these cruel experiences and wretched adventures.”

I again pressed my lips to her fingers, that being the only answer I dared make just then, and sat down to chip in an agitated way at my tinder-box for a light to consume the cheroot that was but half smoked out. When I hear people talk of romantic situations, picturesque

surroundings, and the like, I sometimes look back and recall that night, and put it before me. Romance !—let the reader, if he be a man, take my place in fancy—as my place then was—and shut his eyes and think. Why surely, if poetry is ever to be found in conditions of human distress, I fancy you will find the sanctification of it in our situation this night in an open boat—alone—amidst the scarce visible undulations of the dark ocean, stretching with a measureless shadow into the liquid gloom that looked as far off as the celestial lights which shone in it ; alone !—but the more alone for the sight of the stars trembling their multitudinous, unsympathetic gaze at us—eyes as they seemed to me of countless phantoms heedful of us only out of curiosity—with the vast silence between, that you *felt* as a breathless pause up there, as if some expected end were at hand which the Spirit of Night, inclining towards us with respiration checked, was awaiting. And that was not all either ; indeed it was the least part of it to my mood then. Add the lovely form of the woman, for whom my passion was already deep if secret, reposing at my feet. The eyes of a lover's

imagination, like those of a cat or an owl, see best in the dark ; and the wan gleam of her face—for a *gleam* the whiteness of it looked—was wrought by my fancy into the damask beauty and rich impassioned glances of the sunlit reality ; till, though she lay there vague as the dusk could make her, she yet slumbered before me in her perfections, so that through a long spell of that watch 'twas a sort of doting with me, from which I was not to be broken away by an occasional thought of Alexander clipping in between.

Indeed, I was beginning to think that I had earned this woman ; that our association was now, as it had been all along, of a kind to render possession an obligation ; nor was my honour any longer startled by such fancies. In love, I suspect a man's conscience towards others is sensitive as his passion is weak. His fine talk of duty is proportioned to the slenderness of his stake of emotion. As his heart sinks into a woman's, moral obligations are left behind, floating atop like bladders whose support he no longer requires. Whilst I sat swaying with the heave of the boat, sucking at my cheroot, my

mind went to Alexander, and I thought to myself, as I glanced at the sleeping girl, and then swept my sight over the great desolation of the star-touched sea, Does not my cousin *deserve this*? Has he not brought it about? He knew that I was a single man, accentuated it, indeed, that he might correct any hesitation in me. He was also aware that I was young. Was it just in him to urge upon me a long shipboard intimacy with a beautiful woman, and expect me to emerge unscarred from such commerce, whole-hearted, capable of resigning her with a smile and a handshake, as if she were some parcel of precious stones of which he was the consignee? When the hour to surrender her arrives, I thought, looking down—but, Lord, will it ever arrive? And I remember shuddering wildly and on a sudden, with an involuntary hugging of my pea-jacket to me, as though a chill had come into my marrow, to the presence of this high and sparkling night, and to the black sweep of the sea-line, and to the solitude made awful by the silence and enormous by the low-lying stars.

I dropped my extinguished fragment of cigar

over the side. The water was so full of fire that the fall of this mere morsel of leaf chipped a flash out of it like a spark from a horse's hoof against a flint ; and as though the lambent flame had ignited some fantastic firework shape beneath it, there sparkled out, green and bright, the huge outline of a shark, the beast of the afternoon maybe. The creature looked as if it were the sketch of such a thing, painted by a brush dipped in flame in the dark water. It was moving stealthily ; the tremor of its fins made just a little showering of spangles at those extremities, with a thin, green, fiery vein of wake streaming out from its tail like a rubbing of phosphorus on the wall of a darkened room. The shining configuration drove ahead a short way past the bows, and then the lines of light blackened out, whereby I knew that the beast had come to a stand. But the shape shone again presently, heading towards the moon's reflection, and vanished. However, it was horribly uncomfortable to feel that such a creature was lurking near, and it checked my romancing in a most magical manner. I could think no more of Alexander. My yearning

now was for a breeze. But the star-flakes rode as unblurred as droppings of quicksilver upon the swing of the swell, and there was not the sound of a sigh of air to be caught stealing through the silence of the night.

It would be about three o'clock in the morning—some three-quarters of an hour before dawn at all events—that Miss Grant suddenly sat up with a little exclamation of astonishment, to which cramp might have added a note of its own.

“Oh!” she cried, “I have been dreaming. I did not know where I was. Pray help me up, Mr. Musgrave.”

“The dawn will be here shortly,” said I; “why not sleep the night out?”

“The dawn! Then you have let me take more than my share of rest. Pray help me up. I have slept soundly.”

On this I cleared away the umbrella, removed the shawl that wrapped her about, and assisted her on to her feet.

“Still the same dead calm,” she exclaimed, looking round her. “Now, Mr. Musgrave, you will please lie down.”

“No, I can get the forty winks I want here quite comfortably.”

“But you will go on talking, if you sit instead of lying down, and thus a second night will pass without your having closed your eyes.”

“But I don’t need to plank it to sleep,” said I. “I won’t talk, I promise you. Observe now how in earnest I am,” and so saying, I turned up the collar of my coat, folded my arms, and let drop my chin in a proper sleeping posture; and sure enough, in less than three minutes I was in a sound slumber, for I never could have imagined how worn out I was until I shut my eyes and fairly got under way for a doze.

It seemed to me that I had not been sleeping five minutes when I was awakened by Miss Grant moving; I started, and found myself leaning my full weight against her, my head very coolly resting upon her shoulder.

“I am so grieved to disturb you,” she said; “but a little breeze has sprung up, with some clouds darkening down in the west there, and I knew you would wish me to arouse you.”

The dawn lay green to starboard, a queer, most melancholy smudge of muddy light, looking to ooze rather than to flow up into the dusk, as though it was some dull, thick, luminous atmosphere lifting with difficulty against the palpable obscure. The raven-hued sea-line ran straight as a rule against it. A twinkling of running waters was in the air, with delicate seething noises of ripples coursing nimbly into foam. Indeed, it was blowing a pleasant breeze of wind, with a hint of briskness presently in the hum of it sweeping out of the western gloom; with the stars all eclipsed down *there* by range upon range of dusky shadows, which gave a significance to this wind that woke me to my full senses promptly enough, I can tell you, as soon as ever my sleepy eye turned to the larboard seaboard.

"Due west, as I live!" said I, "since that faintness yonder must be in the east. Heaven deliver us! Why couldn't this blessed air have come away with the sun?"

"It may give us the sight of a ship though," she exclaimed, "let it blow whence it will."

"Ay," said I, "and thanks for that grain of

comfort. But it is abominably mortifying nevertheless. Needs must, however, where Old Nick drives, and so, Miss Grant, for a ratch to the southward, if our shawls will suffer this little hooker to look that way."

I rose, and added, "How good of you to pillow my head! We are supposed to be irresponsible in our sleep; but I think I showed myself pretty rational—I might have swayed towards the gunwale instead—but you should have shaken me off."

"Indeed," she answered quietly, "you *did* sway towards the gunwale, and that you might rest, with some little comfort, I coaxed your head to my shoulder."

"And it went willingly enough, I don't doubt," said I, somehow wishing she had made more of this by her voice, for it was too dark yet to see the expression of her face. But then it was impossible not to forget at moments that she and I were alone.

I laid hold of the halliards and mastheaded the yard, and bringing the sheet aft, got it flat with a good lee helm, and in a moment or two the breezy ripples were washing along the

boat's bends ; but though I dragged the sheet as flat as I durst, dreading to rend the shawls by too hearty a pull, I found I could not bring the dawn, that was brightening fast, on our lee-beam. In fact, the sun rose broad upon our bow, and there were we heading away south-east, with a westerly breeze in chase of us, and no chance of the boat making a better course, trim as I might. But this, like everything else that had happened, could not be helped. So soon as the sunlight flashed fair over the sea, I stood up and took a long look around, then seated myself again with a momentary sickening of heart to the bitter familiar sterility of the broad spread of ocean. There was no sign of our island either, though it was impossible it could be many miles below the horizon. The clouds that at dawn had looked swollen and dark as thunder, showed white and swelling as snow-covered mountains now that the sunlight was upon them ; but though they rose slowly, I was sure they meant wind, the more so from the colour of the sky floating out of them, a dimmish blue, moist and filmy, to where it brightened into the dazzle of the sun. But

spite of its being a bad wind for us, the sound of it in the air, the sparkling movement of the waters, the life that the blowing put into the whole scene, came grateful as a relief after the clock calm of yesterday and the night. Some hope was to be got out of it, at all events ; not a flicker of foam but that might at any moment change into the star-like shining of canvas ; whereas the roasting tranquillity of the hours we had passed through, topped by the deadness of the night, forbade so much as a wistful fancy in that way.

I glanced at my companion to observe how she was weathering this bad time. There was a little languor perhaps in her eyes, a suggestion of weariness in the set of her lips, and her face was pale ; but I witnessed nothing beyond ; no symptom of the haggardness which follows long exposure, and the sort of anxiety that is bred by the constant confrontment of danger. She met my gaze with a smile full of spirit, and patience, and serenity.

“ You are bearing all this far better than I should have dared hope,” said I, “ but some sort of end must be at hand surely. Why, it

would imperil the reputation of a writer of romance as an artist to add in his book even but one more adventure to the catalogue we have left astern."

"We have been so mercifully watched over so far," she answered, "that I am sure we need not fear what remains to come. And then when it is all over how small it will seem!" I shook my head doubtingly. "Oh yes," she cried, "it is the same with all sorts of trouble. People when they are ill think they can never forget their sufferings; but they do, or at least they make very little of them when they get well. It is like the weather that is hot or cold, or wet or dry, outside the memory of the oldest inhabitant. But it passes from the mind, and at the end of the year it is all one, Mr. Musgrave."

"Well," said I, "yours is very good philosophy to help one to triumph over ills which have passed, but whilst those ills are with us, the victory, I fear, must remain with them."

Slowly the breeze freshened, but scarce with weight sufficient in it yet to raise sea enough to render me uneasy. The clouds in the west gradually soared, and some scatterings of them

in feathers and crescents of vapour, blown from the brows of the main body, sailed like so many new moons into the blue mistiness. The sun glared strong over the bow, with so much throbbing brilliance in the ocean all that way, that the eye wept if you but rested it there for a moment. But the wind took something of the sting out of the heat, and the splash of the foam over the side was so refreshing to the ear that the sound of it seemed to melt with a sensation of coolness through and through the system. We broke our fast with some crawfish and oranges, and a drink of water ; meanwhile incessantly directing glances round the sea in search of a ship, for it seemed impossible that such a wind as this could hang steady, with our own southerly trend besides, without heaving something to help us in sight.

As the morning advanced the breeze freshened. The clouds were now broken up into vast puffs of vapour, white as steam, which came rolling stately out of the west, darkening wide spaces of the running, frothing blue with violet shadows. The sea was beginning to hollow a bit, too ; the ridges growing wider and deeper,

along with the sound of snarling in the seething slide of their heads. The yawns in the sail where the shawls had been united widened ; the yard I had manufactured from a bough of a fallen tree fell to buckling uncomfortably to the growing leaps and plunges of the boat. Indeed, I presently found that if the shawls were to stand the sheet must be slackened out yet, so that before it was ten o'clock that morning we were running eastward with the wind almost astern of us, blowing away as fate would have it in the quite wrong direction ; a windy sky behind, a hollow sea all about us, and nothing in sight save a dull, slate-coloured smudge just visible when a sea threw us up, far away down upon the star-board quarter—our island no doubt, for its bearings, according to my calculation, were thereabouts. Could we only have hoisted cloths on our masts fit to sail such a boat as this by, I believe I should have tried for that island again, if only to freshen ourselves up by a rest ashore, and to lay in a further stock of fruit. It was some years since I had handled a boat, but it would all have come back to me quickly, I dare say, had we had ship-

shape and seaworthy materials to deal with ; but there was nothing to be done with the shawls. They would have parted to any approach to tension of the sheet, and so there was no luff at all to be got out of them. However, by noon I had begun to think that were we under as honest a lug-sail as was ever mastheaded, I should have had to up helm and run for it, for it was now blowing fresh ; indeed such a wind as a ship on a bow-line would offer a main-topgallant-sail to, and nothing above it. Under our queer sail that looked like a Dutch flag, the colours up and down instead of horizontal, we stormed along, driving God knows where, saving that we knew the great Atlantic Ocean stretched past the throbbing boundary over our bows. The little boat sheered through it like an arrow, making one long floating slide after another, with a short pause in the drop of her stern to the yawn of water, and then a lightning-like rush forwards as the running sapphire knoll in chase washed brimming to her, giving us a hoist that caused the ocean to look as wide and wild again ; with the flash of the wind too into our gaudy spread of

sail that made me regularly expect to find it in rags next minute. The little craft needed nice steering. The foam would come boiling to your fingers as they clasped the gunwale, and the least swerve at such a moment must have swamped and drowned us out of hand. It was a rushing scene indeed, and there was something of madness to our distracted brains in the eager flashing life of it all. The rolling of the clouds along the sky ; the headlong passage of their shadows over us ; the leap of the sun from the edge of one wide mass of vapour to the next ; the swift hurl of the seas—the swifter to the eye for their impatient, impetuous heave of the snow from their brows to ahead of them—the sparking out of flying-fish from either side our running boat ; the shriek of the wind past our ears when it swept fair and full at us to the rise of the little fabric to the height of the surge ; the blue finger-like dartings of the breeze upon the smooth sides of the liquid slopes ahead, combined with the sensation of our helpless velocity, offered such a picture of movement to the imagination, that the mind might be defied to witness the like of it even amidst the commo-

tion of a tempest from the deck of a large ship.

Miss Grant sat by my side, apparently unmoved. I'd see her sometimes glance astern in the moment of some unusually high billow running us up with a roar and dazzle of foam to the level of the quarters, but without a hint in her face of quailing to the sight, without a tremor in the decision you saw in the marble-like set of her lips. This was one of the realities indeed her spirit could confront. She had shrunk from entering the underground rooms, she had been exceedingly perturbed by the midnight tolling of the bell in the forest, and now amidst a peril that might most honestly have blanched the cheek of a tough old salt, she was as calm as though she slumbered. Sometimes, but at long intervals, she addressed me. It was almost impossible to converse, however. The mere sight of the flying sea kept one's thoughts in a wild popple, like the water, disjointing the links of coherence almost. The noises too were horribly confusing—the ceaseless hiss of billows breaking into foam, the distant thunderous sound of

warring waters swelling into volume, with the scream of the wind cleaving *it*. Besides, what wits I had I required to devote to the steering. Our salvation indeed might lie in the holding out of our sail, and in the drag of it that was rushing out keel clear of the smother of the avalanches chasing us ; but then it was just the sort of navigation to be tyrannic in its demands upon the nerve and eye ; the swiftness of the boat made her responses to the movement of the helm so instantaneously sensitive that the controlling of her to the course of a dart engrossed every thought I had mind enough to summon. One heedless movement of the tiller, and the next minute would have seen the boat bottom up.

And still the sea went frothing to its confines tenantless, our little craft the only object visible upon its breast for leagues and leagues. Were our adventures to end then in our being drowned after all ? Had we quitted the island where at least our lives were safe if our existence was miserable, to court, as my fears had sometimes foreboded, a miserable fate ? My unemployed hand instinctively sought that

of the girl by my side. She held it as if she would comfort me by so doing, smiling to my swift glance at her, for I durst then have no eyes but for the boat.

"You are steering the little ship admirably," she exclaimed; "the wind does not increase, I think, and if this be so, then since we have been safe so far, we have a right to hope that all will continue well with us. Don't be dispirited. Your old instincts as a sailor are equal to worse difficulties than this."

"Blessings on my head for having brought you here!" said I. "You speak of my old instincts as a sailor; they should not have driven me into acting the fool. We ought to have remained on the island. I was mad to subject you to the experiences of an open boat."

"I would sooner be here," she answered. "There is hope for us in this little flying shape; there was none on that dismal rock, with its gloomy cave and the silence of the night there."

This was as much as we could say at a time.

The strong breeze held all day, freshening at moments with noisy guns and spiteful blasts,

but happily these stormy intervals were of short duration, otherwise such a sea must have been set running us would have yielded me but a poor chance indeed of keeping the boat afloat. I thought the day would never come to an end, though I dreaded its ending too, when my mind went to the prospect of the dark night that was to come, with the added weight of wind, which in all probability would follow the sun's departure. From time to time a sea dissolving in foam under us would lap inboard on either hand, with a pouring of seething white water that hissed to our ankles as the little craft swung her nose up; and on these occasions, not daring to let go the helm, I was forced to put Miss Grant to the job of baling, which she managed with wonderful spirit and swiftness, flinging the water out over the side with the soup and boulli tin that we used for a drinking vessel as fast almost as the second-hand of a watch travels, till the boat sprang forward again freed from this cold, sobbing, and sinister freight.

A little before sunset I spied a sail right ahead. The angry crimson in the west seemed

to roll like the clouds into the far east, where it hung in a smoking red haze that looked cyclonic with the huddled loom of the vapour behind it, driven in a heap down there by the wind, and in the heart of this stormy radiance I saw the sail. But whatever the craft might be she was hull down, and the red canvas of her, more like a live cinder than the fabric of a vessel, was to be caught only from the head of a sea when it lifted us. I pointed it out to Miss Grant, rather for the hope the sight might yield her than for any imaginable good it could be to us ; and she rose, passing her arm round my neck to steady herself, and there was so much of an unconscious caress in this action, as though her heart dictated a gesture unnoted by her reason, that it was through Heaven's mercy alone the thrill of delight the contact of her white hand against my neck sent through me, did not cause me to head the boat off and founder her.

She had barely resumed her seat, and was seemingly about to address me, when the wind breezed up with a shriek, the puff taking us precisely as we swung to the ridge of a billow, and away went the shawls, all three of them

vanishing ahead like a fragment of rainbow, leaving the yard in halves, hanging to the halliards like the legs of a pair of compasses slightly open. I half rose with the intention of converting the shawl that had been wrapped about Miss Grant during the night into a jib-headed affair, which might provide surface enough to scud under, with some promise of the pull of it keeping us ahead of the seas, but I changed my mind on second thoughts. "Where are we going to?" I asked myself. "Here I am, suffering this boat to be blown out into the Atlantic Ocean, when our hopes of salvation lie over the stern."

I said to Miss Grant, "Please catch hold of this tiller—so. Hold it steady as you have it, straight fore and aft, that you may keep the boat dead before the wind."

She did as I bade her. I sprang forward, unstepped the mast, and taking the two paddles bound the three together securely by the halliards. This done, I secured the bundle to the end of the coir rope that lay coiled down in the bows. I then called to the girl to put the helm over, motioning to her that she

might know which way to thrust the tiller, and the instant the little craft came broadside to the sea, I flung the bundle of mast and paddles overboard, then floundered aft, moving as low as I could in the boat, scarce knowing whether the next minute would not find us drowning. It was a necessary but a most dangerous manœuvre in that sea. She rounded quickly head on to the pull of that rope; but ere the drag of her could tauten the line she hung a breathless moment or two in the trough, with the sea like a dark wall to windward rearing its head to the height of my own stature, flickering duskily against the crimson in the west, and I could not fetch a sigh, so sure was I that the sweeping volume would tumble sheer over us. But the broad-beamed little structure went floating up it broadside on, with her keel at right angles, whilst I gripped the gunwale with one hand, my right arm encircling Miss Grant to save her from sliding into the water to leeward—and this without shipping more water than a small thunder-shower of spray blowing over us off the brow of the surge as we mounted it. Then as the boat swept into the

hollow behind, she tautened the rope and whipped her nose round to the sea, and so lay rising and falling, heavily indeed but comparatively safely, behind the breakwater of the mast and oars to which she rode.

"It was the only thing I could think of to do," I cried. "Thank God it is done, and well done. You have a magnificent nerve, Miss Grant. For my part I thought it was all over with us, and was too frightened to bawl out."

"We are safer like this than with the sail set?" she said.

"Yes," I exclaimed; "we shall be able to make something like good weather of it now, even should the breeze freshen. I ought to have thought of this old-world nautical stratagem long before it grew perilous to practise it."

It seemed to be blowing as hard again now that we faced it. Our running before the wind had taken half the spite out of it, and it was almost like the change from a pleasant breeze to a sharp gale to feel the hurl of the damp wind rushing down upon us, spray-laden, from

every liquid acclivity we rose to. I dropped on my knees and baled till I cleared the boat. The sun was gone, but the scarlet of his setting flooded the sky to the zenith, and went down rusty red to the opposite sea-line from which the sail I had spied had disappeared. The clouds rising out of the western horizon were darkening to the fading illumination, and the seaboard that way looked as though it reflected the lustre of some mighty conflagration, with smoke in volumes pouring from it. The ocean turned green as the North Sea in winter, with a hardening of the shape and outline of every running ridge, and the rise and fall of the long tracts of snow-like froth upon it rendered its aspect so indescribably bleak, chill, desolate, that the sparkling stagnation of yesterday seemed as a dream, and it defied the imagination to realize that this melancholy picture of froth and warring waters was looked down upon by the heaven of the Antilles. But the boat rode well and buoyantly, and how the breakwater helped her you saw by the savage leap of the froth against it; though it was smothered again and again, yet it made a sort

of "smooth," as sailors say, for our keel, and the prospect of the night was no longer unendurable to me. Before the darkness fell I got some fruit and turtle out of the locker. Miss Grant shook her head, but I insisted, and then she ate a few mouthfuls, but merely to please me, as I could see. Happily we had a drop of rum with us, and I persuaded her to take a small draught, and afterwards I carefully wrapped the rug round her, and made her as snug as the horrible plight we were in would permit.

CHAPTER VI.

RESCUED.

THE wind fortunately did not increase when the darkness fell, but the gloom of the night gave so stormy an aspect to the ocean that you would have thought it blew as hard again as it did. I cannot express how dismal was the appearance of the weltering liquid blackness in whose heart our tiny ark laboured, one moment flung to the sight of the stars, the next plunged into the momentary stagnation and midnight of the Atlantic trough, with long dashes of pale foam heaving like great winding-sheets all about us, and the slender moon leaping with a troubled silver face from the rims of the flying clouds, to render the picture ghastly with the cold, death-like complexion of her light. There was to be no couch for Miss Grant at the bottom of the

boat. The fabric rode well, and took but very little water over the bows, but the wet came in fast through the showering of the spray off the seas curling into foam ahead of us, and obliged me again and again to bale, though it occupied but a very little while to free us.

My companion sat beside me in the stern-sheets, to which place indeed I had transported most of our little cargo of fruit, water, and the like, that the combined weight aft might give the boat's nose a good cock-up for the run of the surge. Happily, though it all looked chill as a wintry Channel scene, the wind blew warm, wet as it was, and the water was warm too with the first touch of it, though, to be sure, if you let it lie long trickling upon your face the breeze made it frosty. There was a great deal of fire in the sea ; a constant sparkling of pallid flames flashing like summer sheet-lightning as they rose incandescent against the sweep of blackness over the horizon where the night lay deepest. Conversation was out of the question. The roaring of the near seas drowned our voices. To render ourselves audible we had to put our lips to each other's ear, sheltering our mouths

even then with the hand against the blast, that would otherwise have clipped our words away as you'd snick the twig from a bough with a pair of shears. I saw that the night was to be a fearfully trying one for us both. My own attention was kept so much on the strain by observing the plunges of the boat, and watching the seas rolling at and past us, that I protest my very soul ached as if it were some physical faculty in me. Our misery, too, was increased by the obligation to keep seated. In calm water, as you have seen, we moved about and eased our cramped limbs by passing to the end of the little craft, or standing; but now we durst not stir, not only for fear of throwing the boat out of trim, but lest we should be flung overboard by one of her many extravagantly wild leaps.

Thus passed the time. I occupied my mind by considering what we should do on the morrow, if the dawn found us alive and the weather moderated. The one ship we had seen at sundown made me hope that others might show next day, but I could not forget that we made but a minute speck on this mighty surface,

invisible at very short distance away, and that our chance of being picked up must lie in a vessel passing close to us.

Whilst I thus sat pondering, with my heart so heavy in me that I could not have felt more melancholy had I been sure that the sun was never again to rise for us, I felt the pressure of Miss Grant's form against mine, and bringing my eyes close to her face I saw that she was asleep. I passed my arm round her that she might have the support of it, and yielded so as to bring her head to my shoulder, as she had mine on the previous night; and thus she lay worn out in a deep sleep, breathing regularly. The moon sliding into some indigo opening at times would shed its light upon us, by which I could see Miss Grant's face as it lay pillowed close to mine in the hood with which she had replaced her hat. It was a radiance to spiritualize her beauty. How passionately my heart had gone to hers, how deep was my love, I never could have guessed so truly as now, when her beauty was close to my lips, and she lay at peace against my breast amidst this thunder of warring surge, this long howling of the ocean

night wind, this convulsive tossing of our little boat. Murder ! what a passion is this same love that it should triumph over such a time as *that* ; dominating every consideration of the horrors of our situation, and forcing my spirit to secretly whisper to itself, that in this delight of slumberous embrace—for an embrace it was in its way, with her head upon my shoulder, her form against mine, and my arm clasping her to me—there was solace enough for as many days of this sort of thing as might go to a month of Sundays ! I'd often fancy that the poets mightily exaggerated when handling the subject of love, as though the world's main occupation lay in thinking of that, and nothing else ; but I now know better. Indeed, I have only to think of that night to know better. Alongside this passion, the passion of life itself is a feeble sentiment. Death seemed to have no terrors for me whilst I held that girl to my heart. The grim feature grinned in every black trough to the glare of the graveyard lights scintillating in each ebon steep, but I was without fear ; I was tranquil, at peace, even happy. But I must own not for very long.

For an hour, perhaps, my enjoyment lasted, whilst I sat snatching at every opportunity which the glance of the moon would give me to look at her as she slept, sorely tempted indeed at moments to touch her lips, whose nearness made the black, damp gale aromatic to me, only that my alarmed honour would spring to the succour of my manhood, and transform my desire into a vein of self-reproachful musing for which I thanked my good angel ; for I vow to Heaven that I never afterwards could have forgiven myself the lightest act of disloyalty to the noble faith this woman had in me. For an hour, I say ; at the expiration of which time my eye was suddenly taken by a pale shadow a trifle on the starboard bow of the boat. It came and went with our tossing. I sent a careless glance at it at first, for it had the look of a small cloud, or some white boiling of water, like to the many scattered all around, that seemed to glare out in ivory heaps to the touch of the moonbeams ; but it hung steadily and grew rapidly, enlarging out of the western darkness with a steadfast spectral sheen that presently assured me it must be the canvas of

a ship. The involuntary start I gave awoke Miss Grant. She sat up, unconscious of the posture her sleep had taken, and I withdrew my arm from her waist.

I pointed whilst I put my mouth to her ear, and cried out, "A ship!"

The mere sound of the word instantly brought her to her full senses. She exclaimed, "She will not be able to see us! Can we not signal? Can we not show a light?"

Alas! I had no means of making a flare. Swiftly I over-hauled the contents of the boat mentally, but there was nothing in her that would burn. The shawls, the rugs which, wetted with the drop of spirits we possessed, might yesterday have been kindled into a flame, were now saturated with the flying spray. Moreover, the vessel was approaching us too rapidly to have enabled me to act, even had an opportunity for doing so offered. It was very soon after I had sighted her that she had shaped out to the proportions of a large vessel of eight hundred tons at least, running under a press, all three royals set indeed; for what was half a gale of wind to us down here, lying in the eye of it

and receiving its full pressure, would be but a pleasant breeze to yonder tall craft, who, by giving it her stern, took most of the spite out of it. But my agony of annoyance at being unable to signal her vanished on a sudden to the horror which her approach excited, for as her hull stole out black against the dusk beyond, blacker yet under the pile of glimmering cloths, with a faltering streak of a white line broken by ports running along it, it looked to me as though she were heading dead for us, and that in a few minutes the thunder-cloud of her shadow would be upon the boat.

I sprang to my feet, in my anguish sending a wild yell against the gale to her, but was immediately flung down again by the jump of the boat. I again staggered up, but only to fall afresh, this time fetching myself a thump that had like to have broken my back. All the misery of our adventures boiled down into one instant of time could not have approached the torment of feeling with which I watched, breathless, helpless, mute as a corpse, the drawing down upon us of that great fabric, storming under cloths that, from the low point

at which we surveyed them, seemed to sweep the very clouds that rolled onwards with her speeding trucks. The wind so drove her that she heaped the foam to near the height of her spritsail-yard, and the raging sound of the parted water there, along with the hissing of the acre of white smothering spume which she sent in thunder ahead of her with every stately stoop of her bows, swept a noise along that rose high above the crying of the wind and the clash of colliding surges, even when she was many times her own length distant from us. It was impossible to suppose that the mere black dot we made upon the tumbling waves was visible to her people, but it did so happen that when she was not above two or three hundred fathoms away from us her head drew a point out, and a minute or two afterwards she was rushing past us close, with ourselves becalmed for an instant in the hang of her shadow as it were betwixt us and the wind, till we rose high to the shriek of the gale again on the breaker-like curl of sea that swelled in a long coil from her cutwater, flashing into a snow-storm when abreast of the gangway.

Terror had constricted my throat ; I could not find my voice. The mere effort to shout wrenched me as though some hand were upon my heart striving to tear it from my breast. I could see no light along her until she gave us her stern, when there shone out some squares of illuminated windows with a gleam of gilt-work writhing round about them, and the wake rising hump-backed from the blackness under the counter to the stare of the lights above, as though it found its milkiness in their lustre. She had the look of a frigate, and may have been one for all I could tell, though more likely she was some fine West Indiaman, well to the westwards for the usual course of such craft bound home. As she had risen as a cloud, so did she vanish like one ; her squares of canvas paling to the moon, then darkening to the brief eclipse, then brightening out afresh into visionary fragility, till the stars were trembling once more where her stately, rolling spread of cloths had hidden them, and the sea went frothing to the mere smudge she made in the desolate, windy, distant dusk.

Miss Grant took my hand and held it, crying

to me, "God watches over us, Mr. Musgrave. To-morrow will bring us help, I'm sure."

But the agony of expectation I had endured, the reaction following the horrible suspense caused by that ship's approach, the bitter grief, the wild feelings excited by her blind, thunderous rush past us, had done their work with me, and I could not have answered the girl to have saved my life.

It was shortly before two in the morning, as I might guess by the passage of the stars, that the wind slackened, shifted into the south-west, and hung there a soft and pleasant breeze, with a thinning away of the clouds, a brighter glory of starlight, a more diamond-like edge to the curl of the moon now sailing low, and a spreading out of the sea into a large, round swell, the sleepy cradling of which was like a benediction to the senses after the sharp, snarling curses of the surges which had been racking our bones and bewildering our brains for hours. We sat talking awhile, but my companion's voice was broken by weariness, and presently she made no answer to some question I put, and on looking at her I saw

that she had fallen asleep. I supported her as before, but it was not long ere I was nodding too. Her soft and regular respiration was an invitation to slumber; the rhythmic swing of the boat too was poppy-like in its influence. My eyelids turned into lead, my chin sunk upon my breast.

I was startled by a voice hailing me. It aroused me from a nightmare, and I woke in a fright. It was daylight, so I must have slept for an hour and a half.

“Boat ahoy!”

I started to the cry that came ringing harsh and loud close aboard, and Miss Grant opened her eyes and sat erect, with an exclamation of astonishment, and a lifting up of the hands as though to fend off some phantasmal object. The sun was just rising, and his first beam like a living lance of light came hurling along the swelling surface of the waters, which brightened out to the stretching of that magic wand of glory into dainty turquoise even as you looked.

“Boat ahoy, I say!”

I turned, and then sprang to my feet with a shout of joy. Close astern of us, within toss

of a biscuit, lay a little fore-and-aft schooner, with her canvas shaking to the light south-westerly wind, into the very eye of which her jib-boom pointed. She was a craft of some twenty-five tons, painted black, sitting low on the water, a beautiful model to the eye, schooner-rigged as I have said, her canvas old and grimy, and liberally patched, her masts badly stayed, the standing rigging gray for want of tar. A fellow in a red shirt and a blue cap, like a French smacksman's, leaned with his bare arms upon the rail, staring at us with a face of a dark yellow. Over the forecastle bulwarks were the heads of four negroes attired in bright colours, and another negro stood at the long slender tiller that swayed in his hand, whilst he gazed at us with his mouth open behind the yellow-faced man. All these details were swept upon my mind with photographic swiftness and fidelity.

I cried out, "For God's sake, take us on board. You shall be handsomely repaid for any trouble we give you. We have out-lived a terrible night, and are in the greatest distress, and must perish if you do not receive us."

“Can yah manage to scull dah boat 'long-side, d'yah tink?”

“Oh yes!” I cried, “oh yes!”

I whipped out my knife, sprang forward deliriously, dragged at the sea-anchor, hauled it streaming into the boat, severed the ligatures, and seizing a paddle floundered aft with it, and fell to sculling the boat towards the schooner. Once a horrible swooning feeling seized me, and I was forced to pause to rally my senses, on which the yellow man bawled out, “Look out for dis yeerie line,” and hove a coil of rope into the boat, which Miss Grant caught, and we were dragged alongside. I thrust my companion's parcel of letters and jewellery into my pocket, and helped her up the side. But the moment we gained the deck the brave and beautiful girl broke down. She hid her face and sobbed bitterly. Her emotion was tonical as an obligation upon me to bear up, otherwise I believe I should have given way as weakly as any woman, so true it is that sudden joys, like griefs, confound at first. I drew her gently to the side, longing to soothe her with a lover's caress, though I started to

the mere fancy of such a thing, and half turned from her, for now that we stood upon a vessel's deck again she seemed to slip magically back to the old bearings she had aboard the Iron Crown. It was the mere sensitiveness in my humour then, no doubt, but I felt it as a sudden chill at my heart, that my lovely associate on the island, my patient, tender, heroic companion of the boat, had changed into Miss Aurelia Grant *merely*, the young lady whom I was escorting to Rio to oblige my cousin, who would marry her on her arrival.

She looked at me through her tears, smiling.

"What would yah like done wid dis yeeirie boat, sah?" exclaimed the yellow-faced man.

"Get her aboard, if you please," said I, "or take her in tow, or cast her adrift. She's of no use to us now, thank God."

"Them rugs is yourn, I reckon?" said the man.

"Yes," I answered; "I shall be glad to have them. We may need them here."

He took a look at the boat, and then ran his eye along the little schooner's deck in a sort of calculating way, and exclaimed, "'Tain't good

enough to send de likes of her adrift. Dere's room yeerie, I guess. Hi! Toby, Hebenazer, Jupiter, lay aft, you tree dam niggers, and git dis boat inboards. Daddy, jump for dah luff-tackle ; jump, mah Hafrican, and stop scratching your head. Quick an' lively's dah word all roun' now."

He clapped his hands, and fell to cutting several queer capers, as though striving to work himself up into a state of excitement, perhaps with a notion of putting life into his niggers. Indeed, he was the oddest figure that could be imagined. His nose was that of the negro, and his mouth so twisted, whether by disease or disaster, that the left-hand corner of it was on a line with his right nostril, whilst the rest of it went up into his cheek in the shape of the paring of a finger-nail. One eye was larger than the other, the dusk of them indicating African blood. His beauty was further improved by a strange growth of short black hair upon his chin, every fibre as wide apart as the teeth of a comb, and as coarse as the bristles of a hog. There was the negro twang in his voice, and he seemed incapable of speaking without bal-

looming. He wore, in addition to the cap and shirt I have already named, a pair of dirty duck trousers which ran flowing to his naked yellow feet ; but grotesquely ugly as he was—and the more so for the contrast of his twisted, guinea-coloured face betwixt his old blue cap and faded red shirt—he could not have been more beautiful in my sight than had he been one of those dewy, ambrosial, lovely spirits who, in *Paradise Lost*, with flaming lances keep the devil at a respectful distance from Adam and his wife asleep.

All was now bustle ; the negroes walloped about, tumbling into the boat, bawling out like school-boys at play, making the craft we had vacated splash to their tumblefication as though they would capsize her. Suddenly the yellow-faced man, who was looking at them over the rail, roared out, “Hallo ! What you do, hey, you black teeves ? What ! you steal my goods, hein ! Tunder and flames ! I gib you something proper to eat, my dickey-birds. Stop now !” with which he plumped right into the boat, jumping as though he meant to go clean through her. I looked to see what was the

matter, and observed all three negroes with their mouths full; one with a lump of turtle in his hand, another with a craw-fish, a third with a bunch of bananas. Their greedy gobbling was like to choke them. Apparently they meant to stow a good cargo away before they could be stopped. The instant, however, the yellow-faced man was in the boat he let drive with his head at the stomach of the negro nearest him, who fell with a crash as if shot; but the other two showed fight, poising their heads in a butting posture and awaiting the onset in that attitude, though they continued to cram their mouths nevertheless.

“Drop what yah’re eating, you black teeves ob de world!” shouted the yellow man, who wisely came to a pause on observing their hostile demeanour. “Yah both hang for blasted pirate when we gets to Nassoo! you see now! Yes, yah both swings for dis, high as de highest tree dere is. Yah’ll see now. Drop it, I say.”

But by this time the fellows had nothing left to drop saving some claws of a craw-fish, which promptly fell from the black paws that held them, whilst the men looked up at me grinning

from ear to ear. Amidst the utmost confusion, the yellow-faced man remaining till the last in the boat to guard our poor remaining stock of provisions, the little craft's nose was got to the gangway, the block of the luff-tackle hooked on to the ringbolt in the stem, and then all hands came aboard to hoist her in. The fellow at the helm left it to help, and though my emotions just then leaned very little to the side of merriment, I laughed till I was breathless at the contortions of the blacks as they pulled in company with the yellow man, every dusky throat delivering a yell with each drag on its own account ; till all at once, just as the bows of the boat were showing over the side, crack ! the fall of the tackle parted, down tumbled the negroes in a heap, with the yellow man on top of them, where they spurred and kicked at one another like a lump of spiders in the bottom of a glass, filling the air with execrations and shouts, whilst they rolled over and over in an inextricable muddle of black faces, cucumber shanks, red, yellow, and white headgear, and shirts that threatened to become rags in a very little while if the sport went on.

I looked for the boat and found her under water, floating with just the line of her gun-wales above the surface, and the rugs, shawls, umbrellas, and the like quietly sinking past her in the blue heave of the swell. The yellow man scrambled out of the twisting group with his cap gone; and now he proved himself uglier than had been at all conjecturable whilst his head was covered, for he was as bald as a turnip down to the semi-circle where his wiry hair bushed out thick as the frill of a Persian cat, and as coarse as cocoa-nut fibre. In fact his bald head showed now like the top of an ostrich's egg stuck in the hair of a mattress. He ran to look at the boat, and when he saw she was under water he yelled out, "Yah dingy villains! Look at yah work, yah black piggies!" and in a paroxysm of rage stooped his head and went butt in afresh for the first negro at hand; but Ebenezer, as the black was called, was too sharp for him; he sprang aside, and the yellow man drove head foremost against the single old pump that stood before the mainmast. The blow that he fetched himself would have lasted a white man for a lifetime,

but it appeared to cause the fellow no further inconvenience than was to be remedied by a brief spell of rubbing. I was getting tired of all this.

“Better get the block unhooked and let the boat go,” said I. “What I want has floated out of her, and there’s nothing left in the locker that’s worth the saving. Besides, I want to have a talk with you. You’ll lose nothing by shoving ahead.”

“Right yah are,” he answered. “Jump now, some black debbil, and free de block. Way ’loft, way ’loft, Toby, and bring dot tackle down.”

He looked about him for his cap, found it, put it on his head, and came aft to where Miss Grant and I had seated ourselves on some small raised contrivance just abaft the rudder-head.

“What’s the name of this schooner?” said I.

“Dah Orphan, sah,” he answered.

“Where are you bound to, may I ask?”

“We’re out a wrecking,” he answered. Then seeing I did not understand, he added, “Dah Orphan’s a wrecking craft dat wisits dah

islands 'way from Providence down to Inaguey and dah Mona passage, to see what's to be got 'longshore."

I understood him now, for I had heard of such vessels.

"You hail from Nassau, I suppose?"

"Yaas," he said, "dat's my country," inspecting first Miss Grant and then myself with growing curiosity.

"I may take it you're captain here?"

"Dat's so, sah."

"Your name, pray?" said I.

"Capt'n Emilius Jeremiah Ducrow," he answered, drawing himself up and speaking slowly and emphatically.

"Well, Captain Ducrow," said I, preserving my gravity with an effort that was the harder for the demureness I noticed in Miss Grant's face, "before I tell you our story, let me thank you from the very bottom of my heart—and, of course, I speak for this lady as for myself—for your handsome and timely rescue of us. God knows how it must have been with us both had succour been delayed. I can afford to pay you for any services you may render us,

and I simply tell you this, that you may know you and your little ship's company will not be losers by your complying with any request I may make you."

He kicked out with his heel as he scraped a bow at me and said, "I see yah a gent. I witness it troo dah accent of yah language. Dere's nebber no mistakin' a gent. I mix in fust-class company ashore myself, and could tell perlite breedin' blindfold by de mere smell of him. Now den," he roared, suddenly turning and looking forward, "get dat gangway shipped. Tunder and slugs! 'tain't dinner-time yet, yah blooming shark-fishes, and so I tells yah. Lay aft to dis hellum, Moses. Beg a tousand pardons, sah," he continued, rounding upon me with another scrape and a kick up behind, "but niggers is de most excrooshatin' people to manage. Dey works 'pon your temper more nor aching teef," saying which he extended his arms, drooping his yellow hands, whilst he turned his head from the direction in which he seemed to point, with his face puckered up into an expression of loathing which the twist of his mouth rendered monstrously ugly and comical.

"Well, now," said I, "I want to tell you our story, but before I begin, I should be glad to know if there's anything to eat aboard this little hooker."

"Oh yes, sah; dere's eating to be had—middling coarse, jest sailor's eating, sah; not fit for dis lubberly lady," bowing low to Miss Grant, "but dah best Capt'n Ducrow can perwide."

"We have not had bite nor sup since last night," said I. "What can you give us?"

"Will yah hab it yeerie or in dah cabin?" he inquired.

"Here," said I, making a shrewd guess at the temperature below.

He called to one of the negroes and told him to put a pot of chocolate upon the fire, then to lay aft with a bit of cold salt beef, ship's biscuits, plates, and the like; "And bear a hand, mah humming-bird," he said, "for 'tain't dinner-time yet, yah know. Now, sah," he continued, addressing me, assuming a fine air of dignity in his manner, "whilst dah wittles is making ready I shall be glad ob yah story."

I at once went to work and related our adventures, and on coming to an end I asked him if he could give me news of the Iron Crown.

He answered no, he had not heard of the vessel, but that he had learnt about a fortnight ago, though he could not recollect the source whence he had received the intelligence, that a vessel bound to Porto Rico had been spoken, and reported that she had on board four men, whom she had found adrift in an open boat, and that the fellows said they had gone in search of a man and lost their ship in thick weather. "And I believe, sah," said Captain Ducrow, "dat dah name of dah wessel dey gave was dah Iron Crown; but I won't swear to it, for I ain't got no memory worf speaking of, 'cept for poetry."

Here he sent a languishing look at Miss Grant.

"For poetry!" I rapped out. "Do you know," I exclaimed, turning to my companion, "that this looks uncommonly like as though poor old Gordon and his men had been picked up."

"I hope so," she answered; "and it seems so indeed. It will diminish by so much the horror of our memories of the ship. And four men too, Mr. Musgrave! *That* must mean that the poor cabin-boy was recovered."

"Pray, captain," said I, "which is the nearest port hereabouts; some civilized place of houses and ships, I mean, where we may be able to put ourselves in the way of getting to Rio?"

He looked steadfastly around the horizon as though seeking for information on the gleaming sea-line, and then gazing at me with one eye shut full of thought, he exclaimed, "Dere'll be nuffen nearer than Nassoo."

"And how far off will that be?" said I,—
"in the shape of time, I mean."

"Well, maybe a week, maybe a month. Dere's no predicating ob de winds. Perhaps yah know dem bootiful lines, Miss—

Sometimes dah gale blow high,

Ho! an' sometimes dah breeze blow small;

Sometimes it breeves in a sigh,

An' sometimes it blows in a squall.

*But ho, my lub, and my lub! Most often when I pants to get
at yah, down yeerie it don't blow at all!*

"You didn't happen to know dem wersedes p'r'aps, Miss?"

Miss Grant answered no, smiling.

"Waal, I ask 'cause dey're mine. When sung to dah accompaniment—"

"Beg your pardon, Captain Ducrow," said I, breaking in here, "but I want to settle some plan with you, for we're in a great hurry to get to Rio, and if you'll help us to arrive there you shall do so on your own terms. What do you advise now?"

This reference to his judgment flattered him. He drew himself up, folded his arms, and cocked his eye thoughtfully at the sky, with the air of a man who recognizes his opportunity, and means to make the most of it.

"Tell yah what," he suddenly exclaimed, "take mah advice, and let me bowl yah to Havanna. Dere's breezes to be trusted off de Bahama Bank."

"All right," said I. "Havanna will suit very well. And now to square the matter off whilst we're upon it—what about the passage money?"

Again he struck an attitude with another

squint aloft, then fell to counting upon his fingers, as it were, whilst his lips moved. He uttered a few disconnected syllables. "De grub—lost time yeerie—nuffen p'raps 'long-shore arter all ;" then bringing his eyes to me and staring a little without speaking, he exclaimed, "Say fifty dollar apiece?"

"You shall have it," said I, pulling out my pocket-book, and giving him a sight of some Bank of England notes in it.

The negro now came along, bearing the meal that had been ordered. A small carpenter's bench was brought from forward, a piece of sailcloth spread over it, and Miss Grant and I fell to. The beef proved a piece of corned buffalo hump, and speaking for myself it ate with extraordinary relish after our three weeks of turtle and craw-fish. Even out of the flinty biscuit I could get enjoyment, whilst the chocolate was as well made and as handsomely frothed as any I ever tasted ashore. The light sparkling breeze, but with the fire of this torrid zone in its breath, hung steadily, crisping the large rounds of the darkly blue swell, and sending the little schooner cleaving through

it in an airy, undulating sliding that was like flying, so buoyantly did the keen clipper keel mount the swelling hills, with a soft lean on their summits from the hot blue gushing that woke a note as of a fountain at the bow, and raised a sound alongside as of the dim melody of musical glasses chiming afar. Captain Ducrow stood by us whilst we breakfasted. I asked him to join us; but he said his own breakfast of tea, biscuit and molasses would be coming along shortly, and he'd rather wait. I then asked him if he could tell me the name and situation of the island we had been marooned upon.

"Waal," says he, "I've been tinkering hard 'pon dat berry question whilst yah've been feeding, but what island it can be passes my apprehenshun, sah. 'Tain't Watling, dat's sartin; 'tain't Rum nor Samana. Your resemblance ain't nuffin like him. 'Tain't Guihaney, nor Planas, nor Cockus" (Caicos, I presume). He added, with an air of desperation, "De debbil only knows what island it is."

I was nearly telling him that we had left the

most of our traps behind us, but on reflection I thought it was best to say nothing about that. Wherever the island might be, it now certainly lay out of our course. Time must be spent in seeking and making it, and time grew doubly precious when I cast my eye at the little companion-hatch, and reflected upon the sort of accommodation that awaited us below, and how for *that*, if for no other reason, we could not be in too great a hurry to end this trip. Our baggage would of course have been serviceable to us, but its recovery was not worth the delay of a deviation. And then, again, I believe the mere notion of going to that island afresh, lying off it, having it in view along with all its melancholy, wretched associations of hopelessness and privations, would have grievously depressed Miss Grant, as it must certainly have affected me, even into a superstitious dread that the mere loom of it above the sea-line would prove prophetic of further disasters to us.

When we had finished breakfast I asked Captain Ducrow what sort of accommodation he could furnish the lady with below.

“I can’t praise him, I can’t praise him,” he

answered, with a solemn shake of his head, to which the swinging of the tassel of his cap imparted additional emphasis ; “but yah shall see him for yourself, sah,” with which he led the way to the companion, and down the three of us went. The small skylight lay open, but it was a stifling little cabin for all that, about the size of a North Sea smack’s, with a tiny room bulkheaded out of it, to which Captain Ducrow pointed, exclaiming, “Dat’s where I lies, sah ; but it is dah duty of ebery gent to make room for dah ladies,”—here he scraped another convulsive bow at Miss Grant,—“and if you will hab dah grace, ma’m, to hoccupy him till we gets to Havanna, he’ll be all de sweeter for me to use again. Dat’s it, I reckon, and so, mam’selle, he is werry moosh at your sarvice.”

“Ah, captain,” said I, “I see now what a fine poet you are. Upon my word, Miss Grant, there’s no finished courtier could have turned a neater speech.”

The fellow grinned so exceedingly with his twisted mouth that you would have thought the emotion of delight must have ended in the

wringing of one side of his face clean off the other.

"It all comes ob mixing in fust-class company," he said, in a voice whose natural negro huskiness was thickened yet by excess of gratification. "'Tain't all nature in this yeeirie yearth. Nebber knew a rale genteel man as didn't git his polishing from dah elbows of dah fust-class crowd he shoves in 'mongst. Yah may take it for dah Lord's truff, sah—"

I interrupted him. "Any cockroaches here, Captain Ducrow?"

"Waal, yaas; more'n one family, I'se afeered."

"Nothing *worse*, I hope?"

"Nebber's nuffin worse where dere's cockroaches," he said; "dah cockroach eats up what's worse."

"It's a pity," said I to Miss Grant, "that your hammock went overboard. We could have made shift to swing it in this bit of a room. However, you'll want a place to sleep in, and we can't do better than accept Captain Ducrow's kind offer."

So it was arranged that the skipper should

clear out his traps, leaving the bunk bare for the reception of a square of sailcloth, which, with a roll of the same stuff for a pillow, would provide my companion with a clean couch at all events. As for myself, I told Ducrow that one of his lockers in the cabin would supply me with as good a bed as I needed. On my asking him where he meant to sleep, he pointed to a hole in the cabin bulkhead forward, which I found to be a sort of bunk-place like to the orifices in which the hardy smacksmen aboard a certain type of vessels stretch their weary, sea-booted limbs when they turn in. This being settled, we returned on deck, glad to escape from the stifling little cabin.

The hours slipped by, the blue swell came running out of the south-west, with the fresh but burning breeze flashing off the heads of the brimming brine into our patched and grimy spread of cloths, under whose pressure the schooner swept along with the subtlety of the shark, and with such a whipping of her ill-stayed spars to every jump as made one look at times to see them go overboard. They rigged up a sort of awning for us, and under

it Miss Grant and I sat throughout the greater part of the day, talking much of the perils we had come through, of our happy deliverance, of the honest prospect that had now fairly opened upon us of our arriving safely at Rio, at no very distant date either ; with frequent interruptions from Captain Ducrow, who would entertain us with twenty odd remarks, with accounts of his wrecking experiences, with inquiries into our story, with several poetical quotations all of his own manufacture, as he protested, sometimes quitting his lofty air to let fly at one of his negro seamen, or even to chase him.

But in this time I was sensible of a change both in myself and in Miss Grant. There was a delicate suggestion of diffidence in her which I could see her struggling against in every smile she gave me, but which nevertheless remained as sensible to me as the aroma of her breath, or the spirit that shone brilliant in her eyes. Sometimes I'd think it the reflection of my own bearing ; a sort of reserve came upon me which I could not control, though when I sought to interpret its impulse, I found I could

but understand it in part. There would be sensitiveness too to increase suspicion. I fancied that now we were comparatively safe, thoughts of my cousin, sharpened by happy conviction that she would soon be with him, caused her to recur to our intimacy—perhaps to certain passages in our intimacy—with the resolution to once again clearly define herself to my mind as Alexander's sweetheart, but as insensibly as her sweetness and gratitude could contrive it, so that nothing of pain might be caused me by this new posture in her, or rather this return to an earlier manner. It was so reasonable, that I could not but think I was right in thus thinking. Most honourably cautious as I flatter myself I had been, glances, nay words, had escaped me in the hurry of my feelings which she would now recall. I remember once that afternoon, when her face was turned away from me, whilst she shadowed her fair brow with her hand as she gazed out to sea—I remember, I say, looking at her earnestly, my mind full of her, wondering what thoughts were in her heart, striving with a kind of passion in me to interpret her beauty

into even the feeblest revelation that might correspond with my imagination of her. She was slow in looking round, and when she did so I grew immediately conscious by her manner that she knew I had been watching her. She let her eyes dwell on mine a moment with a softness that was like an appeal; then as her glance fell, her lips were parted by a smile I would have given all I was worth to know how to translate. I waited almost breathlessly for her to speak, and still watching, I saw a tear drop from her cheek to her hand. She rose suddenly and went to the rail, and stood there a little with her back upon me, and when she returned it was with some commonplace remark about the sultry glimmer of the air at the junction of the sea and sky.

CHAPTER VII.

ABOARD THE ORPHAN.

OUR little schooner was named the Orphan. She had indeed a forlorn and melancholy look, strongly suggestive of friendlessness, with a dampness besides, owing to her being repeatedly pumped out, that gave her a tearful appearance. Her beautiful lines would have made me imagine that she had been a yacht in her day but for the homeliness of her fittings. She leaked considerably, and the negro who acted as mate aboard her told me her timber was so rotten forward that you could dig cubes of dry rot out of the knees and carlings as easily as you cut a cheese. Her aspect of decayed gentility was quite moving in its way. You witnessed the good blood in her, which perhaps rendered her uncared-for condition the

more affecting. But she was an orphan that did not keep her woes to herself. There was not a tree-nail in her but complained, not a fastening nor bulkhead but mingled its groans with the lamentations which broke out from all parts of the little fabric. The very creak of the rudder on its pintles had the note of the sniff of a sobbing man; and then, as one or another of the blacks was repeatedly addressing himself to the gaunt old brake pump in front of the mainmast, there was constantly a choking sound of water in the air, with garglings of the bright stream as it sluiced into the sea through the little holes in the scuppers, which was perhaps the one and final condition needful to render the lachrymose air of this ill-clothed, sun-blistered, neglected, sieve-like Orphan completely effective. Whether such craft are still afloat at the work to which this vessel was put, I do not know. Perhaps the West Indian wrecking business is already an old world story, but in my time a whole fleet of small craft, sloops, cutters, schooners, and the like, were employed in the trade; that is to say, in hunting the many islands in these waters for

wrecks of vessels, and for such commodities as might have been washed ashore out of them.

Havanna, according to Captain Ducrow, was within eight or nine days' sail of us. The outlook of the run, if a run it was to prove, was not a thing to trouble either Miss Grant or myself at the first blush, coming as we did fresh to this little schooner from the horrors and perils of an open boat at sea, and from three weeks of hopelessness in an island prison. But it does not take long for the novelty of rescue to wear out. Before darkness closed upon that first day of our deliverance we had ceased to marvel at our happy escape. We had grown used to thinking of it, and though gratitude was always in our thoughts, there was no longer the first passionate delight and astonishment rising at moments to incredulity.

Hence when the evening settled down hot as iron that has blackened out of its white heat, along with a fining down of the breeze to a mere sighing of air that threatened a dead calm anon, Miss Grant's and my conversation naturally went to the prospect before us, of the

passage in this stifling, leaky, ill-provisioned little schooner to Havanna, that yet lay some hundreds of miles distant. The small awning had been removed; the dark velvet of the heavens showed from sea-line to sea-line fiery with stars. And the moon's reflection this night lay brightly upon the sea. The heavy swell of the morning had flattened; but there was a light movement yet to which the schooner kept time with her whip-like spars, every sail swinging in and out regularly, with draughts of dewy air scurrying cool to one's heated brows from these fannings. A negro stood at the helm, and when the stern of the schooner drooped to a hollow, the ebony figure melted out of sight into the blackness of the water beyond, though with the rise of this end of the craft he would stand out again in a sharp limning against the silver ground of the luminaries. Captain Ducrow had gone below to lie down, and we could hear him snoring in the cabin, a sound as persuasive as the heat as an influence to detain us on deck. The negro mate paced the gangway with naked feet, soundless as the footfalls of a cat, with an occasional halt to squirt a stream of tobacco-juice

over the side. At intervals a black figure would come oozing out, as it were, from the deep shadow forward to the pump, the clank, clank of which was now a familiar sound in our ears, though I recognized it as a threat to our repose when we should come to stretch ourselves for a little rest ; and you saw the fiery water creeping, dilating, fading upon the deck like sheets of wriggling glow-worms, with sometimes a faint flash of the sea-glow upon the swell of the jib, rounding to the roll of the little craft when some sudden brimming of the swell broke into light against the bows.

“ I’m afraid,” said I, “ that this part of our experiences will be pretty nearly as tedious as our island life.”

“ But we are safe,” she answered.

“ I hope so,” said I, “ though I could wish there was less need for pumping. But I fear you will be horribly uncomfortable.”

“ Oh, but after last night, Mr. Musgrave ! ” she exclaimed, in a way as though she would tenderly rebuke me for the little show of irritation and despondency in my manner just now, quite perceptible to myself, though I would or

could not cope with it. "You must not think of me at all—of my comfort, I mean," she added, and then stopped suddenly, as though she wondered at her own expression, immediately saying, however, "The hardship now is very trifling compared to what we have endured."

"That's so indeed," I exclaimed, "but I shall be glad to exchange this existence though, all the same. Buffalo beef and flinty biscuit are not a fare upon which you can long thrive ; and then what a bedroom that is down stairs ! I dread the moment of your going to it. Yet it is absolutely necessary you should sleep under deck ; for observe how dark these planks are already with dew."

"You will take more cheerful views to-morrow," she exclaimed ; "you have suffered much in mind and body, and for your sake, not for mine, indeed, I could wish the cabin a pleasant, airy one, that you might be sure of a good long night's rest. Sleep is what you need."

"I am thinking," said I, waiving this point, and continuing to speak with a little irritation in me, due, as I should have known by giving the thing a thought, to my fancy of her changed

attitude towards me, along with the peevish, secret, jealous dislike of the obligation of conveying her to my cousin, of losing her *then*, of quitting her, consumed by a passion which I was young enough to imagine neither time nor distance could possibly cool,—“ I am thinking,” said I, “ that if we were to come across a good, comfortable, roomy craft, it would be as well for us to trans-ship ourselves without regard to her destination.”

“ I will do whatever you wish,” she said simply.

“ Only,” said I, “ suppose she should be bound to a European port ? ”

She seemed to be sunk in reflection.

“ It would be rather a blow perhaps,” I continued, feeling a bit cynical as I progressed in this talk, “ to be borne off to England or to France or to Spain even, or say North America—”

She interrupted me: “ The ship might be going the other way ; she might be sailing to the East Indies perhaps, or to Australia.”

“ Oh,” cried I, with a short laugh, “ in that case then of course we should stop where we

are. But suppose the vessel bound to Europe, would you be willing to go on board her?"

"If it were your wish—yes."

"But, Miss Grant, so grave a matter must not lie altogether upon my shoulders. Remember your sailing to Europe again would greatly prolong the term of your divorce from your sweetheart."

I could see her smiling softly in the moonlight, though she hung her head. "We may not sight a ship," said she, presently.

"But if we do," said I, "shall we leave this crazy old hooker for her?"

"Yes," she exclaimed.

"Without regard," I said, striving to steady my voice, though my heart just gave a flop that was like to choke me, "to the port she is bound to?"

"Oh yes," she responded, with a note of archness in her voice; "the captain would not alter his course to oblige us, you know."

"It would only signify a little further delay," said I, "with the comforts of civilization between, and that's what we both want now. Of course on our arrival, be the place the

Tagus or the Thames, be it Boston or Marseilles, I should *immediately* go to work to equip ourselves afresh for a second, and I hope a successful, voyage to Rio."

"You are very kind," she answered, a little above her breath, whilst I could see her biting her lip to another smile.

Late as it was, and wearied as I was when I saw her to her miserable little hole of a berth, I yet paced the deck for above an hour afterwards in as odd, unreasonable a temper as ever possessed me, full of the agitation of fifty wild thoughts all rolling one to another in as lively a play as ever the sea showed off a harbour, with the water shoaling in spouts to the sweep of the wind one way, and a current seething into it the other. The fact was, a resolution to keep Miss Grant by my side, no matter what the name of the stars might be which looked down upon us, had been growing and hardening in me, till I whipped out with it in the suggestion that it would be good for us both to tranship ourselves at the first opportunity that offered, no matter where the vessel we entered might be bound. I should have guessed from

her manner all day that such a proposal must have instantly won an eager anxious *No!* from her—instead of which she had promptly assented, saying without hesitation that she would do as I wished; and she had made nothing at all, as you have seen, of my remark touching the destination of the ship we might exchange the schooner for. This was a sort of acquiescence, let me tell you, to excite me not a little, when I came to turn it over during my solitary march to and fro the lightly swaying deck, specially when I coupled it with what I seemed to find in the memory of her down-cast eyes, her quiet smiles, and a something more significant than either in her *way*, to use the old phrase, though I could not give it a name.

This, to hark back to the image I have just employed, was the intellectual gale that set my thoughts running in surges one way; and all would have been an easy rhythmic motion with me, but for the strong adverse tide of fancy which came washing into the run of feeling with consideration of my cousin's claims upon me, my honour as a gentleman, my duty as a

man. Heaven save me!—in my temper I could have struck my foot clean through the deck. I wanted her, I felt that I must possess her, that I had a higher right to her than ever my cousin could advance; and yet the thought of the poor fellow stuck in my throat, and I grew so mad with the bother of the whole thing, that I'd gladly have given the darky who stood at the helm half a sovereign for liberty to kick him fore-and-aft until I was tired. After all, thought I, it is for Miss Grant to decide—*she* must settle it. If she persists in making for Rio—if, in short, she'll have none of me, though mightily obliged, and all that sort of thing—and here my mood grew so outrageous that it was an exquisite relief to me to see Ducrow's face sallow even to the starlight, fork up through the companion with a "Hallo, sah. Keepin' mighty late hours, ain't yah?"

"Oh, go to the deuce!" I cried. "Look here, man, hark to *that* now, bad luck to you!" and as I spoke, the clank of the old brake pump recommenced for the fiftieth time, it seemed to me, that night. "What's the good of going to sea in an old basket?" I shouted.

“Why, damme, Ducrow, don’t you know that a dollar’s worth of oakum is all that’s needed to keep your abominable old pump from disturbing the sleep of the green seamen who lie in shoals here under your keel as you jog along in this weeping bucket?”

He stood staring at me from the companion, as though he thought I had gone mad, and small blame to him for that; then approaching me cautiously, he exclaimed,

“Berry good job, sah, I’m a man of perlite feelings, odderwise I might tomble into a passion, and say someting to wound yah sensashuns.”

“What d’ye mean?” I cried, hoping he *would* fall into a passion, as I felt the need of the relief of a row.

“Sah,” he exclaimed, drawing himself erect, “a man what keeps de select company I co-mingles wid ashore am slow in shocking dah feelings ob folks. But what I should like to say am—mind I don’t say it—I merely intends dat what I should like to say am, if yah ain’t satisfied wid dis little hooker, I’m werry mosh sorry indeed yah ebber came aboard her.

Pump !” continued the poor fellow in a broken voice as though he must presently weep, “ whar’s dah wessel what don’t pump ? Whar’s dah man-ob-war sloop dat don’t pump ? Whar’s dah Indiemán as glorious as sunlight wid gilt and windows wot don’t pump ? Whar,” he continued, raising his voice, “ is de noblest frigate ob dah King of Yengland wot don’t pump ? Whar—” and this he delivered in a shriek—“ is dah magnificentest line-ob-battle ship wot was yebber launched wot don’t pump ? ”

He plucked his cap from his head and flung it on deck, grasped the bush of hair over either ear with his hands as though he intended to tear out by the roots what nature had left him in that way, and then, swaying to and fro in the moonlight like a drunken man, he exclaimed in a blubbering voice, “ An’ you specks dah poor little Orphan to keep dah seas widout pumping ? ”

Tush ! thought I, I’m acting like a fool ; and moved by the way in which the poor creature had received my insulting language, I strode over to him and clapped him on the back. “ It’s all right,” said I ; “ I don’t feel very well

to-night. Pump away as briskly as you please, my lad, I'll not complain again. I have come through some infernal adventures, Captain Ducrow, and though I sneer at your little craft in my ill-temper, I am grateful to Heaven for the privilege of feeling her under my feet."

He unclined his dingy fingers out of his hair and let his arms droop slowly, whilst he looked at me with his head on one side, with a slow twisting up of his eye that was in inimitable correspondence with the absurd cast of his mouth.

"I see how it am, sah," he exclaimed; "yah feels a bit low."

"Worn out without being sleepy," said I.

"Sorter hankering to be soothed, preehaps?"

"Yes," I answered, "but your cockroaches won't help me there."

"Tell yah what will though," said he.

"What?" I asked.

"A little poetry," he answered. "If yah'll sit down I'll gib yah as pretty a half-hour ob sentiment as ebber yah could buy for hard money in dis yeerie airth."

"Much obliged," I answered. "Since I've

been talking to you I've grown a bit sleepy. After all, that pump may be more soothing as you call it than I had supposed. Can you find me anything to serve as a pillow?"

He picked up his cap reflectively and presently said, "I hab it," and stepping to a raised contrivance abaft the rudder-head, he produced an ensign rolled up. "Dere," said he, "dere's dah British colours to lie on. I'll warrant it agin all dreaming, onless it be a wision ob de Income Tax."

I took the roll of bunting, and wishing him good-night went below, and stretched myself upon a locker. A slush lamp swung from a blackened beam. It looked like a coffee-pot with the spout vomiting forth a lump of wick burning in a dim flame that blackened into a line of smoke, which went writhing and quivering to the upper deck, whence, spreading, it loaded the atmosphere of this interior with the flavour of hot fat. The beams were lined with cockroaches, wriggling and heaving in dusky lengths, with a frequent skirr of one of the abominable creatures swinging past my ear or dropping upon my face. It was roastingly hot,

and I feared to find Miss Grant suffocated in the morning, if indeed the sun should find me still alive, after such a course of air as I was now booked to breathe. But miserable as it was below I durst not lie on deck. The dew was like rain, and the light breeze was wet with it. Further exposure, moreover, following on top of what we had already suffered in the boat, would have been sheer madness, seeing that we had managed to come off with our health, which might receive lasting injury from another night spent unsheltered in the warm, moist, fever-breeding atmosphere of these parallels.

I had thought the Iron Crown as noisy a ship as was ever built, but compared with the creaking of this schooner, as she rose buoyant to the dark heave of the swell, floating down into the hollow for another slide upwards, the straining sounds inside of the brig were as the soft singing of a woman to the clatter of a watchman's rattle. But I was dog-tired, as they say at sea, and my cheek could not have pressed the ensign ten minutes before I was sound asleep.

It was a night's rest to refresh me, and though,

when I woke up and rolled off the locker, my back ached from the hardness of my couch, I felt a new man, hearty, hungry, and even cheerful. But it was sickening though to go on deck and find a dead calm, the sea molten glass, scarce stirred by a delicate undulation, the sun an intolerable flame of fire four hours high, with the heavens half full of his white dazzle, and the rest of it hot, silver azure, down to the opalescent edge of the water. In the far east was a dot of light—a sail; and some four points past it to starboard a streak of greenish colour swimming a finger's-width above the horizon, and winding like a small sea-snake in the hot air. It was some Cay, the name of which I have forgotten. There was nothing besides it and the sail in sight, not a pinion of cloud to give us hope of so much as a catspaw.

Miss Grant was on deck when I arrived there. She had slept—not very well she told me; but she had managed to obtain rest enough to refresh her spite of the oven-like sultriness in which she lay. She was awake when the day broke, and rose soon after the light had filled the cabin.

"You were sleeping heavily as I passed," she said, "and in spite of being covered with cockroaches."

"Would you think me querulous and ill-tempered now," said I, looking at her, "after such a night as we have passed, for advising our trans-shipment at the earliest possible opportunity?"

"Did I not say, Mr. Musgrave," she answered, with a demureness that was full of archness, "that I am willing to do exactly as you please?"

I sent a glance deep into her eyes, but the riddle went the whole length of my sight and beyond it. Does she guess that I love her? I thought; and can I suppose that she is even a little bit fond of me—in the right sort of way, I mean? But here Ducrow stumped up to ask us where we would breakfast.

Our first day in the open boat had been a dead calm, as you know, but this was deader yet as it seemed to me, perhaps because of my impatience, that would grow to a torment when hour after hour passed, and the spot of light that signified the sail still hung stirless in the same quarter, with the streak of green past it

flickering like a blowing pennon on top of the white gleam that trembled betwixt the blue of the sea and the blue of the sky, and never a shadow of air from sunrise to sundown to dye a fathom's space of the fiery, breathless surface. There was no comfort to be got out of the schooner at all, saving the news that there was plenty of fresh water aboard. The pump clanked steadily at regular periods throughout the long hours. Now and again would come a brief bit of diversion in the shape of a quarrel between two negroes, and in Captain Ducrow's airs and talk there was much to laugh at ; but the calm was in all things and over all things, flattening down the spirits to its own monotonous level, with the heat so great besides that it prohibited one the ease of venting one's self by eager exercise ; though again and again I'd half start from my seat with a longing of my temper to exhale itself in a spell of swift, passionate pacing from the taffrail to as far forward as I could have got. On the other hand, Miss Grant was reserved, quiet, thoughtful ; always gentle and kind ; welcoming my lightest speech with a smile ; humouring my little fits of petulance, and

making the best of our situation by recurrence to the misery from which we had been delivered. But her gaze no longer met mine with the old brilliant, intrepid steadfastness. There was, methought, a suggestion of coyness about it that showed somewhat oddly when I contrasted it with the dignified sweetness and fearless candour of her earlier bearing. It chilled her manner, to my fancy, as something foreign to her nature, and complicated the conundrum for me yet, for there were times when a look from her, a gesture, a smile, would convey notions that set my heart off at a rapid trot, and then the surface would thinly ice again, and leave me as bewildered as a man who struggles to hunt out another's meaning in a book, the pages of which have been wrongly stitched.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE QUIT THE ORPHAN.

WELL, we had three days of this sort of thing—three days and three nights of it; and then on the morning of the fourth a breeze of wind darkened and roughened the western ocean, and presently the little schooner was again under way, off her course by some three and a half points, but sweeping through it gaily nevertheless, showing herself as rejoiced at her release as if a human heart beat in her, with sharp clips of her sheering stem at the frothing surges melting to her bow, and a saucy whisking of crystals to the wind, and much coquettish prancing and whipping of her ill-conditioned spars, all as though the little crazy beauty should say, “I have started on a dance; the fiddles have struck up; hark to their strains in the

rigging!—no white foam-finger along my path shall detain me; every offered kiss of the blue billow will be repulsed.” Ducrow slapped his thighs and urged her on, bursting into thick laughter at times in his glee, and pointing with a yell of applause to the sparking out of the flying-fish, as though, like an overgrown child, he tasted a kind of victory in the flight of the beautiful little creatures from the winged and buoyant and floating rushes of his leaking, trembling, pump-sodden, worn-out old Orphan.

This day, shortly after noon, a small brig passed us. When I first sighted the squares of her canvas I took her to be a big ship, for she showed a sky-sail on the main, which threw her up tall and spire-like as she came blowing up, radiant as cotton could make her, over the blue edge. I had not said a word to Ducrow about our intention of leaving his schooner if a chance came, but I thought I would do so now, specially as yonder craft promised the opportunity I had fallen half crazy in yearning for during our time of stagnation. But first I spoke to Miss Grant. We were sitting under the

little awning aft, whence we had a good view of the distant sail as it slowly enlarged.

"If that ship there will receive us," said I, "shall we exchange this schooner for her?"

"You must think me very capricious, Mr. Musgrave," she answered; "have I not again and again answered yes to such another question as that? When my mind is made up, I do not quickly change it indeed without excellent reason."

"But I want you to reflect. I wish you to think for yourself, and of yourself wholly. Be that fellow's destination what it will, he is bound to sail as straight for it as the wind will let him. He is heading about east. Now that is a direction exactly contrary to your wishes."

"My wishes!"

"I mean that his bowsprit points to any other quarter of the world than where Rio lies."

She looked at me an instant with an expression in her eyes which showed her mind to be full, though I was too blind to make out a shadow of what was there—too sensitive perhaps I should say, for to be over sensitive

is to be worse than blind sometimes ; and then after a little pause, she said quietly, "Once more, Mr. Musgrave, I'm quite willing to leave the schooner."

"Captain Ducrow !" I sung out.

"Hillo, sah !" he answered from the rail, where he was standing with his arm round a backstay, watching with a grin the flash of his little ship through the small ridges which whitened into cream along the dirty green of the vessel's sheathing.

"Step this way, will you ?" said I.

He sprang to the deck and approached.

"We want you to speak that vessel," said I, pointing. "In a word, we wish you to stop her so that we can go aboard of her, as we find your accommodation scarcely all that we require, at least under these burning heights ; otherwise, we're both of us quite in love with your charming little vessel, whilst we highly value you for your good breeding, and thank you excessively for the attention you have paid us."

This bit of troweling I deemed necessary that the rest might be easy, but his surprise mastered his gratification, and with a sort of

grin in his twisted mouth, whilst his eyes on the other hand stared their amazement, he cried, "Yah want to leave dah Orphan, hein? 'commodation not good? But I know dah reason. De calm's disgusted yah Yah was werry mosh satisfied afore de wind fell."

"Come, captain," said I, "it shall be all the same to you. See here?" I pulled out my pocket-book and produced a bank-note for twenty pounds. "There," said I, slapping it, "place us aboard yonder craft, and this is yours. Of course, if she's bound to some outlandish place we sha'n't quit you; but put us within hailing distance, will you?—signal to speak her; and if she will receive us, and her destination be some port convenient to ourselves, you shall have this money the same as though you had landed us at Havanna."

He eyed the note greedily as I folded it up and returned it to the pocket-book, following *that* too till it was hidden, and then said, "All right, sah. Yah'll miss de Orphan—dere's nuffen afloat—but den ob course if dah lady hain't comfortable—" He suddenly roared out "Hi, Moses! you black teef, lay aft, mah bird

ob Paradise, an' hoist dat ensign half-mast high. Dat'll make 'em reckon we've got someting on our minds."

The negro came shambling along with the ensign that I had slept on, and a very tattered symbol of Britannia's mercantile sovereignty floated slowly aloft, and then blew out when within a dozen feet of the topmast-head. The stranger, however, appeared to take no notice of this. There was no telescope aboard us, but she was near enough now to enable me to distinguish her with the naked eye. She showed no colour, nor indeed exhibited any disposition to shift her helm to bear down to us. Ducrow luffed till our canvas was shaking fore and aft, so that nothing could have been more expressive of our desire to speak than the posture of the schooner, almost at a stand, plunging to the short sea that she had now brought almost right ahead, with every dingy balsamed cloth on her trembling, and the half-masted ensign streaming like a flame aloft, and giving deep emphasis to every hint discoverable in the schooner's attitude. As the stranger drew out she showed herself a brig, a smaller vessel than

the Iron Crown, though large enough to have stowed the Orphan between her rails. She was under all plain sail, with the weather-clue of the mainsail up, and she slided past with graceful courtesyings upon the swell, a streak of gold gleaming at her forefoot to the light of her bows, with a yeasty, trembling hurrying along it like a ball of white wool there, which unwound itself as she thrust it forwards. But though she did not alter her course by so much as a quarter of a point, our own wind-jamming brought her close enough aboard to enable us to see her people clearly. A couple of figures were pacing the poop under the snow-white awning. There was a group of heads forwards, and a sailor in the foretopmast-rigging swinging out with his face towards the schooner watching us. What her nationality was I do not know. I fancied I could trace something of a Yankee paternity in the colour of her cloths and the hoist of her topsails; but be this as it may, had we been some green old water-logged hulk, hoary with barnacles, we could scarce have won less not ce. Nothing imaginable could be more provoking than the sight of those two figures on the poop,

coolly stumping to and fro with our half-mast ensign fair in their view, and our little ship all in the wind, piteous to the eye with the trembling solicitude her shivering canvas gave to her mute appeal.

“Dem’s no sailors,” cried Ducrow, “dey’s what’s call scow-bankers. Moses, mah honey, yah may haul down dah ensign. Ebenezer, my lub, up hellum an’ fill on de little beauty agin. Dere’ll be more ships passing presently,” he added, addressing me. Then clapping his hands together, he yelled at the top of his pipes, “Tail on to dah troat halliards, mah sweet and pleasant livelies ; gib dah Orphan a chance, boys. Look at dah set ob dat sail. Whar’s de gal whose gwine to dance wid de heel ob her boot wore down ? ” saying which he flung himself excitedly upon the tackle in question, roaring out in thick negro accents—

“Wah’re dah dandy ship an’ dah dandy crew.

(Chorus of black throats pulling behind him)

Hi, sah ! ho, sah ! slap ’im up cheearly !

We am dah boys who’s dah lady’s only joys,

(Chorus of black throats pulling)

An’ dah gals dey lub us dearhly.

(Full Chorus.)

“An’ it’s yo hi ho ! dah breeze him do blow,
An’ dah tack will come taut wid dah jigger !
An’ dah ship she roll along
To as lubberly a song
As was ebber sweetly sung by a nigger.”

The job of sail-setting being ended, Ducrow looked at me to see what I thought of his song—manifestly a composition of his own, sung to an air that had an odd touch of African wildness in it, at least to my fancy, as it floated ventrally through the enormous mouths and blubber lips of the chorusing niggers. But I was too keenly disappointed and mortified by the cool behaviour of the brig to heed him.

Our chance however was presently to come, though we had to wait for it a little while longer. It was the sixth day of our being on board the schooner Orphan. Long spells of dead calms, of light head-winds, and small baffling breezes had resulted, spite of the subtle quality of sneaking through it possessed by the little craft, in our discovering that Havanna still lay a fair week’s sail away from us, even supposing a prosperous wind every day, and an average run of a hundred miles in the twenty-four hours.

At wide intervals a sail would show remote and faint upon the horizon, often vanishing magically, like a wreath of mist devoured by the sun. Life even on board a large West India-man in these waters, the most roasting liquid tract on the face of the world, is unendurable enough even with a wide spread of snow-white awnings to cool the deck, with shadow from the forecastle to the taffrail ; great cabin-windows wide open, the heels of windsails penetrating every aperture, with a constant sluicing of the planks to keep them cool. But think of a small red-hot schooner, that in moments of a breathless calm, when the sun stood almost overhead, tingled with sounds as though she were actually frying ! the cockroaches multiplying day by day, the cabin atmosphere growing more and more difficult to breathe every time one entered it, no shelter save a strip of awning aft, nothing better to eat than salt meat and ship's biscuit, nor to drink than cold water, of which, though the stock was plentiful, the quality was by no means good, and which was certainly not to be rendered more palatable by the one jar of fiery rum that Ducrow kept

secret in his lazarette, never producing it without taking a dark and suspicious view of the little skylight, or going on tiptoe to the companion to make sure that no man of his crew was peering down.

But there was bound to come an end some day or other to these faint gaspings of catspaws ; to the intolerable brassy dazzle of the noontide heavens, to the putrefying calms of the night, with dim configurations of phosphorus and graveyard glowings of ghostly fires, making one think with the poet that the very deep was rotting.

It was the morning of the sixth day of our rescue from the perils of the open boat. All night long the weather had been breathless, but with the rising of the sun there had come a small breeze of wind, a little to the eastward of south, which as the morning advanced freshened, and the schooner was sliding through it once again, heading saucily along her course, with Ducrow strutting the deck in high spirits, a couple of negroes repairing a sail forward, another at the tiller, a fourth perspiring at the old pump.

Suddenly Ducrow bawled out, "Sail ho!" pointing ahead.

I looked languidly in the direction he indicated, not rising even, so sick was I of this cry of "Sail ho!" heretofore as barren to my purpose as a parrot's meaningless croak of the words. I was conversing with Miss Grant at the time, and turned to her afresh, proceeding in what I was saying without giving the vessel ahead another thought. Time passed; presently Ducrow said, "Dat fellow's a big 'un what's coming 'long dah. We mustn't hab de go-by given us this time, if it's to be helped, sah. Must make more fuss, odderwise dere's no chance ob getting compassionated." So saying, he went to the little locker, took out the ensign, and bent it, Jack down, to the halliards, and ran it half-mast high, belaying it slackly that it might blow out with a good visible curve. This done, he bawled to his men to shorten sail.

"Down jib, mah blackbirds! down wid both tawpsails! jump, mah blacks, jump! Hurrah now fo' de ship. Up maintack, let go mainpeak-halliards. Now den, Hebenezer, you black

teef, down hellum, and trow us right up into de wind—up into de wind—up into de wind, I says,” walloping about in a most extraordinary manner as he bawled these orders, and springing from the deck on his naked feet as though the planks were too hot—and well they might be!—to suffer him to stand upon them. Thus all in a moment, so to say, the little schooner was brought to a halt ; her mainsail “scandalized” her masts half denuded of canvas, her bowsprit pointing to the wind, the few cloths she showed shivering to the breeze with such a symbol of human distress flying aloft as richly coloured and most admirably rounded off the picture of misery which the posture of the vessel now submitted.

The stranger was heading dead for us, as though she must run us down indeed, so immediately were we lying athwart her hawse. She came steadily along, with her yards braced forward, a vessel apparently of six hundred tons, painted black, standing high out of water, a foretopmast-stunsail set, her royal yards close to the trucks, with a glimpse to be had of large black tops under the curve of her topsails. I

went with Miss Grant to the side to watch the stranger. My heart beat fast with expectation, yet I struggled hard with my impulse of hope, dreading in the mood I then was the effect of a second disappointment. Suddenly the vessel took in her foretopmast-stunsail, then a spot of colour floated aloft past the shining round of her courses to the gaff end. It blew out, and I muttered just above my breath, "Thank God!" as I recognized the English flag.

"He means to speak us, at all events," I cried. "Pray Heaven he will show mercy, and take us off this schooner. Why, if he were bound on a search for the Nor'-West passage I'd go with him."

"I dare say," Miss Grant exclaimed, in a musing sort of way, "that the captain of that ship will wonder at our wish to leave the schooner when we are within a week's sail of Havanna."

"Yes," said I, looking at her, whilst she kept her face averted by continuing to gaze at the approaching vessel; "but *we* are not bound to Havanna, you know. Rio is the place we started for; and besides, are we within a week's

sail of Havanna? Perhaps to-morrow may introduce a succession of calms that shall last a month, during all which time we are to lie here in this bescorched schooner, with our lovely countenances slowly roasting into a rich brown under yonder heavenly furnace! Eh, Miss Grant? Never mind about that skipper there *wondering*. Better Van Diemen's Land in a ship like *yon*, as they'd say in the north, than Havanna with Rio close on its heels in this little frying-pan."

She turned just to glance at me, with a gleam like a smile in the look she shot through the dark fringes that drooped again as she resumed her attitude of watching the coming ship. 'Twas not often that I got a view of her mind; but by her manner then, it seemed to me it was her intention to let me know she had obtained a very accurate sight of mine. Be it so, thought I; but if that craft there will receive us, we'll board her all the same.

She was a handsome picture as she drew close, becalming the blue under her lee into a tremorless mirror, in which the reflection of her swelling canvas sank in cream, but lustrous as

silver too. She had so keen a stem that she clove the rippling surface with scarce the disturbance of a flash of froth in the wrinkles which broke from her brows, and which went away astern of her in lines of light when her shadow was off them, and when they streamed fair to the sun. She was heading as if to run us down, but on a sudden her main-topsail was braced aback, with a falling off of her head that gave us a view of her decks, with two white quarter-boats swinging at the weather davits; a couple of men standing at the poop-rail clothed in white, with broad straw hats; beyond them the flutter of woman's apparel, as I thought; several sailors on the top-gallant-forecastle, their whole shapes plain through the low open rail that protected this part of the craft. As she came floating alongside within easy talking distance, she seemed to tower above us like a line-of-battle ship. One of the two men dressed in white approached the mizzen-rigging to hail us. I now saw a woman standing near the skylight, and at that moment another woman came up through the little companion-hatch and joined her.

Ducrow sprang upon the bulwarks, and pulling off his cap he wildly flourished it, whilst he vociferated, "Ho, dah ship ahoy!"

"Hallo!" responded the man standing at the mizzen-rigging.

"What ship am dat?" bawled Ducrow, but with a fine air of importance in his manner, as though this were a ceremony to yield him dignity, and therefore to be made as much of as possible. I secretly bestowed a sea-blessing or two upon his bald head in my impatience; but it would not do to interrupt him.

"The Bristol Trader," came back the answer, "of and for Bristol from Havanna, five days out. And what schooner's that?"

"Dah Orphan ob Nassoo, bound to Havanna, but percastinated by calms and head-winds. We hab somet'ing pertikler to communicate, and will send a boat."

"Ay," cried the other; "but can't you tell us what's the matter with you without sending a boat? You have your ensign Jack down; what is wrong? Bear a hand, for time's precious."

On hearing this, and fearing that Ducrow

would muddle this opportunity away for us with his negro dandyfications and fine airs and words, I sprang on to the rail beside him, and with a thrust of my elbow tumbled him inboard.

“Ship ahoy!” I shouted.

“Hallo!”

“The case is this. This lady,” pointing to Miss Grant, “and myself sailed as passengers from the Downs in June last aboard the brig Iron Crown. There was a mutiny. The mate was killed, the captain disappeared, and the brig was headed for Cuba. One of the Bahama Cays was made, and this lady and I were marooned on it. A boat came ashore, we left the island in her, and were picked up by this schooner, and we desire to exchange her for your ship, if you will receive us as passengers.”

The man in white flourished his hand. “Come aboard,” he exclaimed; “I dare say we can arrange.”

“Over wid dah boat, over wid dah boat, mah darkies,” screamed Ducrow. “Hurrah now, bullies, no stopping now to shave, if yah please; ’taint dinner-time yet, so no loafing.”

The schooner carried a boat on chocks amid

ships; as leaky, sun-blistered, paint-denuded a fabric as the mother whose child she was. The gangway was unshipped, the three negroes and Ducrow yelling and bawling all together, and stamping with their naked feet till the thrashing of the decks sounded like twenty or thirty people clapping their hands, ran the boat to the gangway, and launched her smack-fashion. The excitement of one negro however carried him overboard with her. He fell plump, but his black head instantly shot up alongside like a sweep's brush out of a chimney-pot, and in a trice he was in the boat, combing the wet out of his breeches and grinning into Ducrow's face, who shook his fist at him as "dah clumsiest son ob a hog wid a sow for a grandmudder as was ebber to be met 'pon dah high seas."

A second negro then jumped into the boat, into which the water was beginning to drain in twenty places, so that I saw if we did not bear a hand we should be awash before we had half measured the distance between the schooner and the ship. The negroes threw the oars over, and splashed me alongside the Bristol Trader as though rowing for a wager, with a

dollar for the man who should catch the most "crabs." I sprang into the main-chains, and in a minute stood upon the ship's poop.

The captain, as the man who had hailed us proved to be, was an intelligent-looking, weather-darkened, iron-haired fellow of some forty-five years, thin, smooth-faced, with a gray, seawardly eye, kind in its expression. I raised my hat, he did the same. I repeated my story, now relating it circumstantially. The two women drew near as I talked, and he interrupted me once to introduce me to one of them as his wife, to the other as a friend of hers, who was going home in his ship as a passenger. My romantic story seemed quite to the taste of these ladies, who frequently broke out into exclamations of astonishment, whilst they sent glances full of curiosity at Miss Grant, who had withdrawn to the shelter of the awning on the schooner's quarter-deck, and sat there watching us, too far off for her beauty to be evident, though one might have guessed her charms even at that distance by the delicate light of her face under her broad hat.

"But you were bound to Rio," said the captain.

“Yes,” I answered.

“You may easily get to Rio from Havanna,” he continued. “That schooner should carry you to Havanna in a week. It seems a pity to travel all the way home again, when your port is comparatively at hand. We could provision you too with a few articles to render the run more tolerable.”

“No,” said I warmly, “there is nothing in food and drink to render that schooner tolerable. Her cabin creeps with cockroaches, the atmosphere can scarce be respired for the heat and smell of it. The lady and I have talked the matter over, and we are earnest in our wish to return to England. Why, see here, sir; you’ll be able to land us at Bristol before we could hope to reach Rio, even suppose yonder schooner should convey us to Havanna in a week’s time, which I gravely question when I recall the spells of weather which have nearly murdered us. Of course,” I went on, seeing him look a bit reflective, “we should ask you to receive us as passengers, that is to say, as people who will be glad to defray all charges for accommodating us.”

"Oh," he said, in a tone of indifference, "that matter can be hereafter settled. As a mere question of humanity it would be my duty to receive you. You have no luggage, you say?"

"None."

"Well, sir, the lady can come along at once." He looked over the side. "Hi, you Jumbos! shove off now, and bring the lady aboard."

I hailed the schooner: "Miss Grant, the negroes will fetch you. Ducrow, come you along with the lady that you may receive your money."

Ten minutes later I had assisted Miss Grant over the side, and escorted her on to the poop. She bowed with stately grace to the two women, who courtesied to her as though she were a princess. The captain, whose name by the way was Foljambe, held a trifle aloof at sight of her, eyeing her with a mixture of astonishment and admiration. Perhaps now, with a couple of her own sex at hand to contrast her by, helped by such definition as her fine figure would obtain from the white and roomy deck, the clean brass-work, the sparkling

skylights, the snowy awning, with the wheel in the sunshine past it, at which stood the smartly-dressed figure of an English sailor carelessly leaning upon the spokes, watching us under the spread of a great Cuban hat—perhaps now, in the swift glance I threw at her, I could see in a manner scarce to be managed before, how little her beauty had suffered from the trials we had come through, from exposure to the high sun, from the many bitter anxieties which had clouded her mind. The glow of the tropics was in her cheek, and seemed to clarify the brightness and to enrich the loveliness of her full, dark, speaking eyes; the very neglect of apparel enforced by privation appeared as a grace in her, as the dishevelment of her soft brown lustrous hair gave a character of romance to the dignified sweetness of her countenance. I could not wonder that Mrs. Foljambe and her friend stared, nor that the captain should have fallen back a step to her approach, as though veritably startled by her beauty, as I had been indeed when I first met her.

Captain Ducrow came up to me, cap in hand.

His strut was incomparable. I heard the half-smothered laughter of men forward as he bowed first to the captain's wife, then to her friend, then to the captain, bringing his cap to his heart, and slowly bending his body, till I thought he had a mind to double himself up after the manner of stage contortionists.

"Berry sorry to lose yah, Massa Musgrave," he said to me, "and berry much sorrier still to say good-bye to dis most bootiful lady, which," he added, with an emotional grunt in his voice, "I may nebber, nebber see agin in dis yeerie earth—" He was proceeding, but I could see that Captain Foljambe was impatient. So I cut him short by handing him the bank-note, and then shook him warmly by the hand, thanking him with the sort of sincerity that a man who had gone through what I had could hardly miss of, for his rescue of us and his subsequent kindness. Miss Grant also gave him her hand, addressing a few words of gratitude; but my gravity vanished when the poor fellow suddenly plumped down on one knee and lifted her fingers to the side of his face where his mouth was.

“ Now then, skipper,” cried Captain Foljambe, “ away with ye, my lad. This is the breeze to make the most of, so please don’t keep me waiting.”

“ Gor bless yah ! Gorramighty in hebbin bless yah both, an’ make yah happy,” cried the poor fellow, backing to the gangway as though from the presence of royalty, and speaking with so much emotion that I looked to see him blubber. “ May dah good Lord look down pon dis ship, and send yah ten-knot breezes all dah way ; ” and arrived at the gangway, he dropped over the side, and was pulled to his little schooner.

“ Get your topsail-yard swung, Mr. Murphy,” exclaimed the captain, addressing the mate who was the other of the two men I had noticed clothed in white, and who had been standing quietly on the lee-side of the poop, waiting for this business to end.

The sailors sprang to the braces ; the great yards came slowly round, the sails, silk-white to the sunshine, swelled out to the blue breeze, and the Bristol Trader was heading along on her course again. Meanwhile the two negroes

had splashed Ducrow aboard his little schooner in hot haste, to save themselves the job of baling the boat, as I suspected ; but I gathered what the hurry was about, when the poor yellow-faced fellow, who had drawn his cap down over his ears in his excitement, floundered as though pursued by a bull to the signal-halliards, hauled down the ensign with frantic gesticulations, bent it on afresh with the Jack right-side up, and then sent it aloft again, yelling to one of his negroes to lay aft in a voice that was distinctly audible, though the distance between the vessels was being magically widened, considering the lightness of the breeze. The negro seized one length of the halliards, Ducrow the other, and between them they dipped the flag, that is to say, they lowered it as a token of farewell—hoisting it anew, and then lowering it—not once, not five times, but over and over and over again ; the whole dusky crowd of them howling a good-bye at us every time the flag rose to the masthead, until the schooner had slipped so far astern that their voices could no longer be caught, whilst the flag itself had dwindled into a mere red spot.

It was the last I saw of the little craft ere I turned, to accept Captain Foljambe's invitation to step below. I behold her now again with my mind's eye, heaving to the long ocean swell, with a tremor of light in her black side, as she lifts it wet from the brine, slowly paying off with her jib rounding, her main-peak hoisting, a dingy white topsail slowly creeping to the mast-head, the Liliputianized figures of her crew making a very toy of the little fabric indeed as she heads slowly into the mighty loneliness of the ocean past her bows, with the glare of the sun in the sky over her going down like a wall of dazzling brass to the sifting into it of the whitish blue of the heavens trembling upon the remote western confines. Ah, there are no memories so dream-like as those one carries away from the ocean.

CHAPTER IX.

HOME.

THE Bristol Trader was one of the most comfortable ships of her class that ever I was aboard of. Her cabins were tall and roomy, her decks spacious, her port-holes large, her hatchways big enough to serve for an emigrant ship. After our experiences on the island, in the open boat, and on the schooner, it was like arriving at some cheerful, hospitable inn, with the welcome of a blazing fire, a hot supper, and a warm bed, after hours of blind groping over miles of snow-clad moors, to find one's self in such a ship as this. One needs to be marooned to appreciate comforts made cheap by homeliness and familiarity. We had been absolutely destitute aboard the schooner, without the commonest and meanest conveniences—no hair-

brush, no towels, soap, sheets, and what not ; nay, there had not been even a looking-glass, and neither Miss Grant nor I had the least idea of the sort of faces we submitted until we had been conducted to our cabins by Captain Foljambe and his wife. I borrowed a razor from the captain, and shaved myself for the first time since I had left the island, and I protest the sensation was as though nature had clothed me in a new skin. It is the common-places of life which make themselves heard of in maritime disasters. The captain was good enough to lend me a clean shirt and collar, with other articles of underclothing, all which sat very comfortably upon me, as we were pretty nearly of the same build. He told me that his wife was taking care of Miss Grant, that she (namely Mrs. Foljambe), together with her friend Mrs. Tweed, had between them a plentiful stock of clothing, so that my companion could be at once made comfortable, and kept so until our arrival at Bristol.

He was a man that improved on acquaintance, shrewd, respectful, sailorly in a sort of careless manner that was a grace in its way,

well spoken, with something of the manners of a well-bred gentleman, roughened without being coarsened by the usage of the ocean.

He sat in my bunk whilst I dressed, and asked me many questions about the Iron Crown, and our life on the island. He could give me no news of the brig, did not seem to know of her name even, but he told me that whilst at Havanna he had heard of a vessel which had fallen in with a boat containing four men, that had gone adrift during thick weather from the craft that owned it; and this coming on top of Ducrow's narration, confirmed my belief that Gordon and the others had been saved; for which I was heartily thankful indeed.

It was long past the dinner-hour, but neither Miss Grant nor I had broken out fast since the morning.

On my telling Captain Foljambe this he immediately gave orders to his steward to prepare a meal for us in the cabin, and by the time I had finished civilizing myself with the razor, hairbrush, and the skipper's linen, the meal awaited us: cold roast chicken, fine white biscuits, ham, several plates of fruit with the

sweetness of the tropic soil still in their flavour and freshness, a decanter of brandy, a *monkey* of cold water—why, Heaven bless us! after poor Ducrow's brine-toughened buffalo meat and his caulkers of water warm from the scuttle-butts, this was such a princely regale that the recollection of it bids fair to outlast the memory of many a sumptuous banquet that I had before and have since sat down to. The afternoon sunshine flashed azure off the water through the open ports, and filled the interior with a soft golden haze that floated cool to every sense in me after our days and nights of the Orphan's cabin, upon the atmosphere freshened by the gushings of air from the white canvas tubes of the windsails, whilst the eye was soothed by the violet shadow cast by the awning down upon the open skylights, in whose gaping casements the hot breeze hummed as though it echoed the burden of the island insect chorus.

I was conversing with the captain's wife and Mrs. Tweed, two very homely, unaffected ladies, brimful of kindness and sympathy, when Miss Grant arrived. I had never seen her beauty look so rich. The peculiar complexion

of the atmosphere in the cabin just then may have helped her, but methought there was the glory of the newly-blown flower in her as she stood a moment after coming out of her cabin, instantly smiling as our gaze met. I brought her to the table, and we seated ourselves. There was a West Indian plant, bearing a starshaped flower lovely as the lily, but inodorous, trained against the handsomely-framed trunk of the mizzen-mast, sloping abaft the table from the deck to the cabin. The captain cut one of these flowers and presented it with a sailorly bow to Miss Grant, who thanked him, and put it in her bosom.

“ This sort of thing,” said I, almost jealous to think that the hand of a stranger should have touched a stem that was to find so sacred a resting-place, “ makes one feel alive again. I fancy I must have been dead for a month, perhaps a little longer. Everything strikes me with an astonishment that is preposterously unnatural. This damask table-cloth, how white it is ! this crystal tumbler—I never before knew glass to sparkle so ! and yonder roast chicken !—upon my word, I thought there had been an end of hens.”

The captain laughed. "I have been shipwrecked, sir," he exclaimed. "I've known the time when the hairy face of a seaman, all knobs and warts, has set me weeping as though I was taking my last view of the only man left in the world besides myself."

"How very odd!" exclaimed Mrs. Foljambe. "I've never heard you say that before, William."

"My dear," said he, "had it been the last *woman* perhaps I shouldn't have cried."

"Because I dare say you'd have taken care it shouldn't have been your last view of her," observed Mrs. Tweed dryly. This lady was a widow.

"Now, Miss Grant," said I, working away at the roast fowl and ham, and immensely enjoying Captain Foljambe's excellent old brandy "shall we ask our kind friend here to shift his helm and give chase to the schooner, that we may overhaul and board her afresh, and make our way to Havanna in her?"

"If you will return to her, I will," she answered.

"That means no," said Captain Foljambe.

“No for all hands. Bad look-out to shift the helm now, Miss Grant. It blows a pretty six-knot breeze.”

“Hurrah!” cried I. “Why, with this clipper keel under us we shall be heaving Bristol into sight whilst the little Orphan is still dodging the ghost of a catspaw in waters not yet hull down. No, no, it was a voyage not to be pursued. A twenty-five-ton boat, Mrs. Foljambe! her one pump going day and night! all the plagues of Egypt rolled into one, in the shape of cock-roaches! Think of *that*, Mrs. Tweed.”

“Shocking, sir,” she cried, “the horrid creatures! But there are none here, thank goodness.”

“Here and there one,” said the captain.

And so we went on, chatting and eating, then mounted on deck, I with a big Havanna cigar in my mouth, so joyous in spirits that it might have needed but a band of music to have started me off dancing for the rest of the day. What words have I to describe the delight that filled me, as I looked at the sparkling blue sea, sloping between the awning-stanchions to the heavens, which were reddening all round to the

westering of the luminary, and at the swelling folds of the courses, which, past the edge of our canvas shelter, rose in stately cloud upon cloud, every cloth silently doing its work, rounding marble-like to leeward, the shadows of the rigging lying in delicate curves in each still, snow-like heart, and the tinkle of water swiftly shorn at the stem faintly sweeping a bell-like note through the steady breezing of the wind ! The ocean looked boundless from the height of the poop-deck, and the way before us was yet a long road. But my heart beat the more gladly for the very thought of it when I turned to look at Aurelia Grant, and reflected that she was still by my side ; that for many a week we should be together ; that, in short, I had by this manœuvre indefinitely postponed the hour of our separation. Was I dishonourable ? Was I disloyal ? Was I unfaithful to my trust ? Maybe, maybe. How *you* would have acted in my case I cannot tell. Fallibility must fail somewhere, says the old moralist. And I was in love.

But you have made one eventful voyage with me, and I am as little desirous possibly as you that you should undertake a second uneventful one—

uneventful, I mean, in respect of incident, for we were a smart ship, and the crew hearty and honest, the captain a wise disciplinarian, and his two mates plain, sturdy, steady-going seamen. Yet though uneventful in the sense of gales of wind, collisions, lee-shores, leaks, mutinies, and the rest of the list of maritime perils, for *me* it was marked by a passage that rendered it more stirring than all the experiences we had gone through boiled down into one could have proved. I have spoken of a quality of reserve in Miss Grant's manner when aboard the schooner, of my own sensitiveness to it, and how between us there had come something that seemed to hold us a bit apart ; but this had made way before we left the little vessel for the old frankness, the warmth, the sweet and fearless cordiality of her bearing towards me when on the island. Yet we had not been twenty-four hours in the Bristol Trader when I noticed that her behaviour was once more charged with a chilly and uncomfortable element of reserve. Then she even grew timorous at times, shunning my gaze, though sometimes I'd catch her unawares watching me with an expression of wistfulness

that lay sad in her eyes, like a shadow of melancholy there. I very well knew she had guessed that my proposal to sail home was merely that I might possess her society for some weeks or perhaps months longer, and I would fancy that in thinking over this she had come to resent it, as though she was now clearly seeing that my duty lay in proceeding with her in the schooner to Havanna, whence, as Captain Foljambe was constantly saying—and I certainly did not like him the better for this confounded trick of iteration—we would have met a ship to transport us to Rio without delay.

All this secret worrying in me over what *might* be in her thoughts resulted in cooling my manner too, though my love for her increased as my demeanour became inexpressive; and sometimes it would happen that we were together only at meal-times, by which I mean that I would go and sulkily post myself in some corner with a book, which I would read upside down, whilst she paced the deck with the captain's wife or Mrs. Tweed, or remained below in the cabin. I was for ever seeking to interpret

her, but never could find the hints I sought. When with her I would constantly talk of Alexander and of the plans I had formed : for instance, we should arrive at Bristol ; we should then proceed to London, where she would take up her abode at the hotel she occupied before she left England, whilst I made all necessary preparations for a second attempt to carry her to her sweetheart. But I took notice whilst I thus talked that she had very little to say to it all. She'd thank me and tell me I was too good, and protest that it was not likely she would put me to the trouble of escorting her again ; that most probably on her arrival in London she would write the story of our adventures to Rio, and wait for my cousin to fetch her—*most probably* ; indeed, she would add with a sigh, she had not made up her mind. There was plenty of time to think the matter over, and meanwhile I was not to dream that she would again subject me to the risk of undergoing perhaps worse adventures than those which we had happily come safe through. This and the like she would say, but always with a sort of air of indifference, as though she

talked to a person whose programme she did not regard as a very sincere one, and as though in consequence she could take no interest in it.

There came a day however when feeling grew too strong for me. Conscience had wrestled hard with inclination, but to no purpose. Often, whilst tossing in my bunk at night, whilst seated alone on the deck by day, I would ask myself if I had not acted dishonourably in falling in love with this woman, and whether I should not be rendering my sin heinous beyond forgiveness by proposing to her. But it was like putting some insoluble riddle to my heart. I gave it up. Had Alexander been my brother instead of my cousin it would have been all the same. I was head over ears in love with Aurelia Grant, and I made up my mind to marry her if she would have me. And there came a time, as I have said, when patience gave way, when passion grew too powerful for restraint, and when I determined to put the matter boldly to her and see what she had to say to it.

The ship was then on the equatorial verge of the Bay of Biscay, so you will gather that I did not make up my mind in a hurry. Our

clipper had made a noble run through the trades, with fine weather and pleasant breezes to follow, and now on this day at noon we found ourselves under all plain sail on the port tack, bowlines triced out, a light breeze off the bow, and the vessel sliding quietly through it over the long undulations of the Atlantic swell, flowing with pulse-like regularity from the westward. When the dusk settled down, the half moon shone in the sky. Her light lay soft and white upon our high-reaching canvas, and filled the shadow between the rails with a silver tint, through which the forms of the seamen moved in dark outlines. The awning was furled, and the poop-deck lay almond-white to the stars, with many quicksilver-like ripplings of radiance in the polished brass-work, and the man at the helm rising with the lift of the stern against a faintness like the after-glow on the sea-line there, his shape sharply wrought upon it, and the circle and spokes of the wheel keen as though he and it were an etching in India ink.

I came on deck after an hour spent alone in my cabin, and stood a little at the head of the ladder that led to the poop, trying to persuade

myself that I lingered to admire this fair ocean night-picture ; but I found my eyes quickly going from it in search of Miss Grant. I saw her in a moment standing in the dark shade flung on the deck by the reflection of the mizzen-mast. She was talking to Mrs. Foljambe and Mr. Murphy, the chief mate. I put on the lightest air I could summon, and approached the group in an easy saunter.

“ Pleasant weather this for the close of October, Mrs. Foljambe,” said I ; “ it won’t be quite so nice a little higher up.”

“ There’s no climate after all, Mr. Musgrave, that beats the English,” said Mrs. Foljambe.

“ Well, madam,” said I, “ I might agree with you if I were a slug or a water-rat.”

“ You must go to the west of Ireland for a fine climate,” quoth Mr. Murphy.

“ Too much steam,” said Mrs. Foljambe. “ I once stayed a week at Ballyvaghan, and it was like looking at natural scenery through the smoke from a bowl of hot punch.”

“ You should have thried Ballaghaderreen, ma’m,” said Mr. Murphy.

“ Say Ballydehob at once, now,” answered

Mrs. Foljambe ; “and I am sure a hob the poor creatures who live there must find it—a hob with a steaming kettle on it.”

“Well,” said I, “this evening is a fine one, but it is a bit chilly for all that. What say you to a stroll, Miss Grant ?”

She assented, and we left Mrs. Foljambe and Mr. Murphy arguing on the climate of Ireland.

“Will you take my arm ?” said I. “This long heave is gentle, but it doesn’t help to steady one.”

She did as I asked. I thought I felt a little tremor in her fingers ; she was silent and pensive, looking away from me towards the ocean ; but this had been her demeanour of late, and was therefore not new in her.

“This is the Bay of Biscay,” said I ; “not many more days now before us.”

“I shall be glad when the voyage is ended,” she answered ; “the Foljambes are very kind, everything is nice here, but I am weary—*weary* of the sea, Mr. Musgrave.”

“You had need be ; it has used you very ill, and something of this weariness of the ocean you are extending.”

“Extending! I don’t understand you.”

“Well now, to be plain, Miss Grant, you have had enough of my company.”

“You don’t *think* so,” she answered quietly; “why do you *say* so then?”

“I say so because I think so, and I think so because the fancy has been forced upon me by your manner. Since we have been in this ship you have ceased to be what you were.”

“What was I?”

“Warm, cordial, frank, making our association to me so sweet an intimacy, that though I was clamorous to leave the island, I now vow to Heaven I would be glad to go on suffering a lifelong imprisonment in it to preserve what I have lost in you.”

“You have lost nothing,” she exclaimed, speaking in a subdued voice, that did not however conceal her agitation; “if you have noticed any change in me, it is but the reflection of your own manner.”

“My manner! It should be warm, not cold; it should be bright, not gloomy, if love be the hot and radiant emotion the poets tell us it is, Aurelia—”

She fixed her dark eyes upon me as I pronounced her name, and halted, looking at me intently, but for a few seconds only, then her gaze fell, and she resumed her walk, still holding my arm.

“Aurelia,” I said gently, “you heard what I have said—you know now that I love you.”

“I have known it a long while,” she answered, still looking down, but speaking with composure, though I have little doubt I should have felt her heart in her finger-tips had I brought them to my lips.

“You say I have no sympathy; but I am quicker to see than you—quicker to recognize.”

Her meaning was as clear as the sound of a bell. We were to leeward, forward as far as the deck extended; the sheet of the great main course curved like a dusky wing betwixt us and the moonlight on the water, and we stood in this dusk, concealed from the others, obscured from all eyes in the fore-end, though clearly visible to each other. It was my turn now to halt. I let fall her hand from my arm, then clasped it and the other as well. She stood passive. I drew her to me till her face was

close to mine, and kissed her forehead. She released her hands with a manner of tender agitation, and went to the rail and looked over, and I heard her draw her breath in a sob.

I stepped to her side and said, "If I have grieved you, forgive me. The time had come when I could not help speaking. I have loved you from the hour I first saw you. It has been a hard fight. I have endeavoured to do my duty, will still attempt it if you command me, but your beauty and sweetness have conquered my resolution of silence."

She wept silently.

"See now how I have vexed you," said I.

She shook her head. "No, I am happy," she answered, in a voice so low that I had to bend my ear to catch the words. "I am indeed happy in knowing that you love me. It is as it should be. It is—it is—as *he* would—as *he might* desire it. Poor boy. But—but——"

She raised her head, and the next instant her face was hidden on my shoulder, my arms around her, and her heart beating against mine.

And thus it was that we managed to round off in true poetical style our most eventful

experiences as a marooned couple. That this was a right and proper ending I will not affirm, but that we could help it I do most vehemently deny. And, after all, if you will but gravely consider the matter, you will see it was scarce possible but that two people thrown together as Aurelia and I were should fall in love, to the exclusion of all promptings of loyalty and conscience on the one hand, and of all impulses of an earlier passion on the other. Nor was this all. The character of our intimacy demanded our union. Indeed, Aurelia did not scruple to tell me afterwards—I mean when she was my wife—that even had her love been made to falter by thoughts of my cousin's claims upon her, and by the memory of their vows and betrothal, the recollection of the island must have sufficed to rally her into accepting me as destined by fate or old ocean, which is the same thing, to be her husband. But why enlarge upon this? It would have been easy to shift the helm of this yarn towards the close of it, and submit myself as having cut a highly virtuous figure. But then is it highly virtuous to heave one's emotional obligations over-

board ?—to confront a pure and ennobling passion with a countenance acidulated by some bolus of conscience that is, strictly speaking, neither here nor there, though it works very uncomfortably in the moral system, without leaving one much the better for it ?

We arrived at Bristol on the 6th of November, after above four months of much livelier experiences than I should again care to undergo on any account whatever, and proceeded to London, where before the month was out we were married. The wedding, as will be supposed, was a very quiet one, so quiet indeed that there was nobody but ourselves present ; I mean nobody in any way concerned in it. Privacy of this kind is a happiness that attends the nuptials of those only who are without relations ; that is to say, when the marriage is an honest one, done in the light of day, and not what one may call a window-and-ladder match. Aurelia was as good as alone in the world, and for the matter of that so was I ; so we drove one morning to church and returned man and wife, and I remember saying to my blushing beauty as we stepped arm-in-arm from the sacred

building, that if all marooning experiments had ended as ours did, the punishment must long before have become so fashionable that there would be no uninhabited islands left; the most sterile rock would be occupied by some languishing couple, and it might come to skippers being handsomely rewarded for reporting so much even as the creation of a volcanic spot of earth.

But before I was married I wrote a letter to my cousin, Alexander Fraser. It was a very long letter indeed. I gave him the full relation of our adventures, and do not know that I spared him the most trifling detail, so anxious was I to submit the whole picture to him, that there might be wanting no incident which, omitted, I might have regretted as helpful to the general apology of the missive. I told him that of course I expected he would resent my conduct at first, that he would consider I had taken a mean advantage of the trust he confided in me, but that when he came to think the matter carefully over, he would understand that nothing else than what had happened was possible. I touched very delicately upon Aurelia's and my enforced intimacy of association

on the island ; delicately, I say, but I indicated it too, for therein, methought, lay the very handsomest excuse any man could seek or expect for what I had done. Whatever occurred to me to say in self-extenuation, I said ; but though I took great pains, wrote in a subdued strain, with plentiful appeals to his sailorly instincts as a man to judge me kindly, to believe that I had embarked most honestly, that for weeks and weeks I had never thought of the girl but as his sweetheart, that even after we had quitted the island I was still for conveying Aurelia to Rio, though I was loving her passionately then, and abhorred the thought of parting with her—I say, that though I did my best in this letter, I felt at every word which dropped from my pen that it was like rubbing a cat the wrong way, as uncomfortable to the stroking hand as to the creature thus dealt with. Perhaps I said too much ; then it would occur to me that I had not said enough ; and sometimes I thought it would have been best to say nothing at all, and leave him to conclude that the Iron Crown had foundered, and we with her.

Well, a few months after I had dispatched this epistle—this great bundle of manuscript I should call it, for it ran into many sheets—during all which time not a syllable reached me from Rio, I received a letter from Captain Foljambe, in which he gave me two items of news, both of great interest to me.

The first concerned the Iron Crown. It seems that this vessel had been found derelict at sea, about a hundred leagues westward of the island of Cuba. She was fallen in with by a French barque, whose people on boarding her discovered a couple of auger-holes in her bows, one of which had been plugged, whilst the leakage of the other had been, strangely enough, stopped by a fish that lay jammed in the orifice, just leaving room enough for a small draining of brine, scarce as much as would have raised a foot of water in her hold in a fortnight. On entering the cabin they found the ceiling, stanchions, and a portion of the forward bulk-heads scorched, with other signs of a fire having been kindled, manifestly for the purpose of destroying her. There were traces of blood upon her quarter-deck and waist, whether

human or not could not be told. Aloft she was a complete wreck ; most of her sails in rags, her main-topmast gone, her fore-topgallant-mast hanging by its gear, and about ten feet of her starboard bulwarks smashed level to the covering board. Her name was plain upon the stern, and she was unquestionably the brig in which we had sailed. She had apparently encountered a violent storm, but whether before or after her abandonment was not to be guessed. There was nothing to be done with her, and as she would prove a formidable obstruction to drive into in the dark, the Frenchmen knocked the plug out, cleared away the fish, and left her to drown. Nothing was known of her crew, and I may as well say here, that though I continued long afterwards to make inquiries, I never got to hear of them, and therefore remain to this hour ignorant of the manner in which Broadwater had met his end—whether he was murdered, or perished by his own act.

Foljambe's second item of news was to this effect. During his outward run to Havanna, when somewhat to the southward of the Great Bahama Bank, he sighted a little schooner

which, on his nearing her, proved to be the Orphan. Ducrow, standing at the rail, recognized the Bristol Trader, and yelled in his demonstrative fashion to be permitted to step on board, that he might make inquiries after myself and the lady. There was very little wind at the time, and Foljambe told him he was at liberty to come, but that he was not going to back his topsail-yard to oblige him. On this the schooner's boat was thrown over the side, Ducrow and two blacks jumped into her, and in hot haste and shouting loudly swept the little leaking fabric to the main-chains of the ship, over which Ducrow floundered, smirking, flourishing his tasselled cap, and bowing as of old with many contortions. The main purport of his visit was, that I might be told through Captain Foljambe that he had found out the island on which we had been marooned, and had carried off not only our luggage, but the Spanish negro whom we had left there. The fellow, he said, was now aboard the schooner, and he pointed to a black who stood surveying the ship from the schooner's fore-castle. He told Captain Foljambe that he did not know

there was a man on the island—and indeed I had said nothing about the poor runaway, as I supposed that he desired to lie in hiding for the rest of his life in that ocean retreat. Ducrow and one of his darkies—Moses—went ashore, and after a short search found the open hatch in the sand. They peered in—the evening was then gathering—and Ducrow, being afraid to go first, told the negro to lead the way, giving him a kick to help him to a proper posture of resolution. Moses plumped down, and Ducrow was in the act of following him, when he heard the negro yelling, “De debbil, de debbil!—here’s de debbil himshef,—here’s de debbil himshef!—oh, Lord!” followed by sounds of wrestling and hard breathing, whereupon Ducrow instantly took to his heels, but before he could reach his boat he was tripped up by some one who pursued him, the man in chase falling over him heavily. This fellow proved to be the Spanish negro. Ducrow, jumping up, concluded that his end was arrived, and whipped out with a long knife, intending, as he told Captain Foljambe, to sell his life at the highest price he could get for it. Then

followed a parley. The negro could only speak Spanish. Luckily for Ducrow, he knew a few words in that tongue, enough with gesticulations to let the negro understand that he meant him no harm. Ebenezer, the mate of the schooner, was in the boat. This black had been a Cuban slave, and was able to converse with the other, who was speedily tranquillized by his pacific assurances. When he was told that he would be a free man under the British flag, and that whilst that bunting continued to fly over his head he need not fear of being recaptured, he told Ducrow that he would be willing to enter as a sailor with him. In short, he had had enough of the island, though I believe he had not lived alone upon it above a fortnight. He said it was haunted. One evening he saw the ghost of a black man come out of the sea and pass into the forest and vanish, and he declared it was the spectre of the dead negro who had been with him in the boat when they drifted to the island. It ended, Ducrow told Captain Foljambe, in their clearing the underground rooms, not only of our luggage, but of everything else in it—the chairs, table, pots, and

pans, muskets, and so forth. This was good booty to Ducrow, who made a division of it amongst the men, the Spanish negro being very well satisfied with his share. Ducrow sent many flattering messages to Aurelia and myself, and particularly begged the captain to compliment me in his name on my taste in shirts, and to inform me that he had never worn anything choicer in the way of linen. I confess we both begrudged the rogues the apparel they had come by. I know that Aurelia's and my outfit had cost me a round sum of money, and that she had left enough dresses and other clothing behind her to have furnished her with a trousseau.

It was eighteen months before I heard from Rio, by which time I had arrived at the conclusion that either my cousin Alexander was dead, or that he hated me too violently to put pen to paper. Aurelia believed that death was the reason of his silence. He had died, she believed, of grief, and I was heartily glad, for my own sake as much as for my wife's, when one morning I received a letter from him ; for

I may as well say her notion that he had died of a broken heart was the cause of many fits of melancholy in her, which rendered me a little peevish with jealousy; so that had Alexander not written, there might by and by have come some little unhappiness into my married life.

He began by saying that he had made up his mind not to write to me at all. He had hated me consumedly for months after reading my letter, and would have been pleased to kill me, only that the voyage home was too tedious and expensive an undertaking for so twopenny an issue. News of the Iron Crown having been found abandoned and in a wrecked condition had reached him before he got my letter, and he concluded that Aurelia and I were at the bottom of the sea. He had written home to the owners of the brig for information, but his inquiries remained unanswered. His getting my letter, he said, was like receiving a missive from the other world, and he swore that before he was one-third through it he heartily wished that it *had* come from the other world, and

from the deepest and most fiery part of it too, for to that place did his temper consign me at every full-stop he came to. Of Aurelia he desired to say nothing. Women were sent into the world to make fools of men, and not even old age hindered the most of them from struggling on in fulfilment of this mission. But a woman could sometimes make as great a fool of a man by marrying him as by jilting him. For many months he had been wondering which of us two—meaning himself and me—was the more deserving of compassion, but now he was no longer in doubt, and he could only hope I was happy, he was sure. Aurelia was a beautiful woman, and he had been very much in love with her ; but after all beauty is but skin deep. And then, again, people's feelings change wonderfully. Time converts the loveliest face into a mask, and often into a very ugly one ; and how swift is the flight of time ! We clasp a beautiful creature to our heart, and when she lifts her face from our bosom, lo ! we find the angel of Time has been with her, and 'tis all pucker and rheum, crows'-feet, sausage-curly,

and the deuce knows what besides! As to the *durability* of sentiment— Stop! he'd give me a yarn. He was at a funeral last year. A young wife had died, and the husband was inconsolable. His grief at the grave-side was terrible to witness. His friends had to grasp him by the arms and coat-tails to hinder him from precipitating himself into the yawning chasm when the coffin was lowered into it. He wept, he howled, he tore his hair, he shook his fists at the sky, and asked with streaming eyes what he had done to deserve this dreadful affliction. This emotion was sincere down to the very heels of it. "Four months later," added my cousin, "I received an invitation to his wedding!"

"And now," continued the letter, "since I, have made up my mind to write, I may as well give you and Mrs. Musgrave *all* the news. Will you ask your wife if she remembers Isabella Radcliffe? No doubt she does. Mr. Radcliffe and Mr. Grant were, I believe, friends, but a coolness sprang up between them some time before the latter left Rio. Though Isabella has

not the *good fortune* to have Spanish blood in her, being indeed purely English, and eminently gifted with her countrywoman's noblest quality—the grand characteristic of the *entirely* British lass—I mean loyalty, Dick, she is exceedingly beautiful, nevertheless. Her eyes are violet, richly fringed, her hair auburn, rarest of tints; there is nothing *majestic* and *stately* about her; she is merely *lovable*, plump, fragrant, sweet to see and to hearken to, with so exquisite a contralto voice that everybody calls it a fortune to her. Her papa is dead, and his will appoints that the sum of eight thousand pounds is to be settled upon her when she marries, providing that she does so with her mother's consent, presuming of course the mother to be living. The mother *is* living, and *I* have her consent, and perhaps some of these days I may have the pleasure of introducing the prettiest woman that was ever seen in South America to Mr. and Mrs. Musgrave. Happily she resides at Rio, so I shall not be obliged to ask any relative to bring her to me. Be good enough, when you next write, to let me know what I owe you for Mrs.

Musgrave's outfit, and for the hire of the cabins of the ship you embarked in. Convey my kind regards to your wife, and believe me, my dear Dick

"Yours very truly,

"ALEX. FRASER."

Poor Alec!

Yet this letter magically cleared our home atmosphere. There were no more melancholy references to my cousin's broken heart. I have drunk many a bottle with Alec since, and he is godfather to my second boy, and Aurelia is godmother to his third girl.

So passes the procession of life across the stage of the world. I had advanced but a few steps, so to speak, on the boards when this experience I have written about befell me. My wife and I were young, our hearts had a strong beat, the sun was yet in the eastern heavens, his light very glorious, and the land fair and gay with flowers; and now I am hobbling off within a few paces of the dark wing whose shadow, when the actor has entered it, shrouds

him for ever from the gaze of the company that sit watching the show. But the western radiance still lingers, the dusk has not yet fallen, and my wife and I, though our clasped hands tremble with the infirmities of age, still walk in sunshine, finding cheerfulness in the lingering lustre, though we know it to be waning fast.

THE END.

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